

Dec. 12, 1924.

Dear Brother:

We are passing through a most important crisis in the life of our beloved Church. It is widespread, insidious and perplexing because Modernism is using old and familiar words in expressing new theological opinions. Nevertheless it is evident that the attack is against the inspiration of the Scriptures, a belittling or denial of the deity of Christ, His Miracles, His Sacrificial Atonement, His Resurrection and Ascension to the right hand of God and His return at the end of age to judge the world. These essential doctrines of the Word of God and of the Presbyterian Church are being assailed not only by those who are without the pale of the church, but by some who are under vows to sustain and propagate these doctrines.

We believe this crisis calls for immediate and united action.

1. Because we are under obligation to defend the faith once delivered to the saints.
2. Because Presbyterians throughout the Church need to be informed concerning the real conditions that face us and the alarming extent to which this attack has gone. It is most important that the facts in the case should be explained in order that our people may be aroused to immediate action.
3. While great gain was made along certain lines at the General Assembly of 1924, we are apt to lose that which has been won if we are not fully prepared for the Assembly of 1925. From many quarters reports are coming in that our brethren consider that all difficulties are settled, whereas we believe that the very life of our Church is seriously imperiled.
4. For the security and welfare of our beloved Church we recommend that a series of mass meetings be held in different sections or zones of the church for the purpose of informing our people of existing conditions and urging the selection of such Commissioners to the General Assembly of 1925 as will be loyal to the historic position of the Presbyterian Church. Because many Presbyterians elect commissioners early in the year prompt action is needed.

We would appreciate very much a prompt reply to this letter telling us if you approve of our proposal and if you would be willing to start in your locality a movement for a meeting such as indicated above, to be held at as early a date as possible.

This letter is written you as the result of a series of conferences recently held by a number of ministers in this part of the Church and we earnestly hope and pray that we may have your most hearty cooperation. May we hear from you promptly and will you let us know if the proposed plan commends itself to your judgment?

Cordially yours,

John F. Carson
J. Gresham Machen
Albert D. Gantz
Frank E. Simmons

Maitland Alexander
A. Gordon MacLennan
Ford O. Otman
Walter D. Buchanan
Committee.

This letter was signed by the Committee,
but to save time the signatures are in type.

W. D. Buchanan.

The Presbyterian Advance

JAMES E. CLARKE, EDITOR

PRESBYTERIAN BLDG.
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Handwritten initials and numbers: JEC/115-

June 17, 1925.

Comme No. 1

Charles R. Erdman, D.D.,
Princeton Theological Seminary,
Princeton, N. J.

My dear Dr. Erdman:

Here is a matter I trust will receive the attention of the Special Commission you are to appoint. It comes to my attention from various sources, but is thus expressed by a Texas pastor: "There is one phase of the inquiry into the causes of unrest that I wish you, with your larger resources, would look into, that is, the extra church bible association, organized and supported by the fundamentalists." He means that one group of our ministers is associated with undenominational organizations which are steadily teaching the people in a way which causes division. I think, myself, that this is a subject which should have consideration.

Very cordially yours,

James E. Clarke

JEC/EG

Topeka, Kansas, R.D. 8, 7-28-25

My Dear Dr. Swearingen:

I am thinking and praying almost constantly these days about our Presbyterian church and the status of Christians and Christianity thruout the world. And I must say that I am very happy to be thus occupied. My faith is optimistic and serene. I am greatly interested and have already thought very earnestly about the possibilities of the Assembly committee on Peace and Prosperity of which you are Chairman. I am glad that you are the Chairman, though my gladness sympathizes at the great responsibility.

I have noted carefully and with interest what was suggested at the Cardiff conference as to a new creed; also the action of one of our Presbyteries in proposing by overture to make the Brief Statement the ordination test.

Before I had received the news of these tendencies I had been asking myself What can our our great committee on Peace and Quiet say or do? I had written had written somewhat and offered it to the papers, -even to the Christian

Century. What hardiness! It is scarcely time yet to know whether this will get a place in any of the papers. It would be slightly antedated because I did not know of the Cardiff thought, and the Milwaukee overture when I wrote it. I enclose a copy which you may glance over and then destroy. I enclose another copy which came to me since I have read about the Cardiff and Milwaukee Presbytery discussions.

~~#####~~
 My earlier thought was that our church must correct the strife by some change in or addition to the constitution, - by an interpretative section expressing the fundamentals of Christianity, rather than of the Confession of Faith, such as every evangelical Christian could subscribe to, - in short such a statement as would per force become a basis for uniting the denominations throughout the world. I felt that in seeking peace within our denomination we would be helped by at the same time and method seeking union of churches, at least a basis for it in our body. I think there is great leverage for peace in this emphasis of the Christian necessity for union.

But more recently another method has come to me which seems to me might accomplish the same ends more readily. This method is not to touch the Confession or try any legislation with regard to examination for ordination, but to overthrow the Presbyteries to change the ordination vows to the essentials for pure Christianity. The other copy enclosed is my attempt to write such a change in the questions for ordination in our Form of Government. This too destroy at your will. I cannot resist the feeling that there is ground for good hope that our Presbyteries would adopt this or something of the same intent.

I beg your pardon for asking your attention to all this. I hope it is not presumption on my part, and that there may come from it some suggestion that may be helpful to you.

With great respect, and all good wishes, Very truly yours,

David McKerr

THE FAITH OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD

The entire world is asking for the fundamentals of Christianity. Both the Christian and the non-Christian world wants to know the religion of Jesus without any denominational or national coloring. The governments of the world are needing to know and put into practice the essentials of Christianity in order to be able to secure and enforce, morally, any league of nations. Neither the Presbyterians nor any other denomination can find any step toward peace and quiet, except it be also a step toward that ^{upon} ^{all} ~~which~~ Christendom can unite. Any other course is toward where there is no peace. Presbyterians must stop disputing about the details of Presbyterianism and their uninspired Confession of Faith, and turn to the study and practice of the fundamentals of Christianity instead. This is the only road to "that they may be one as we are"

Can the unquestioned truths, - the basal truths, the sine qua non of Christianity be stated, and the church and the world educated to their acceptance?

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 Christianity answers, Yes. Here follows an attempt at such a statement .

I. It is the basis of true religion and of Christianity as that religion that in the beginning there was God, the one only true God.

II. It is fundamental of Christianity that God is a Spirit, a person, infinite in being, presence, knowledge, power, love, and righteousness; the Creator and controller of the universe; including man, a mortal body and an immortal spirit in the image of God, finite ^{being,} in person, presence, knowledge, power, love, and righteousness; therefore, in relation to God, ^{fellow man} and righteousness, a sinner.

III. It is fundamental in Christianity that the infinite God and Father has revealed himself in creation, in providence, in the spirit of man made in God's image, and in the Bible, known as the word of God, which is, through finite writers, God's revelation of himself, and man, in all their relations and ways.

IV. ^{is} It is fundamental to the name and meaning of Christianity that God became incarnate in Jesus Christ, as the God-Man, very God/ real man, ^{and without sin,} Emmanuel, "God with us".

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V. It is essential to Christianity and the Word of God that Jesus lived, taught, wrought, died, and rose again, because of the needs of man, the sinner; also as a demonstration of God's love for the world; also as a power for righteousness of spiritual character to as many as are persuaded by this love and their own experiences to partake of this life with God so graciously provided.

VI. It is the climax of the essentials of the Word of God and of Christianity that God has a Kingdom of Heaven on the earth; that he will consummate that Kingdom in his own good time and way; that, meanwhile, Christianity through the life and devotion of Christians, - all Christians, unitedly, - shall "disciple the nations", - teach the last sinner at the ends of the earth to see and accept the love of God in Jesus, - to live as he taught; namely: As ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so to them; Love God more than self, and your neighbor as yourself.

If some such statement as the above ~~wer~~ of pure and undefiled Christianity were put before the world by official announcement of some such organization as the Federal Council Of Churches, it would result perforce in such discussin and education thruout the world as woud astound all past Pentecosts.

David P. Kent

Topeka, Kansas

~~Do you assent to the essentials of the Christian religion, namely:~~

VOWS FOR THE ORDINATION OR RECEPTION OF MINISTERS

In the presence of God and these witnesses you do solemnly affirm the following statements of faith# and duty:

1.It is the foundation of the true religion and of Christianity as that religion that in the beginning God was, that he is, and ever continues to be the one only true God.

2.It is fundamental in Christianity that God reveals himself in creation, in providence, in the spirit of man made in God's image, and in the Bible, which is the Word of God through inspired writers revealing God himself, and man, in all their relations and ways.

3.It is fundamental to The Word of God and to Christianity that God is a Spirit;-a person, infinite in being, presence, knowledge, power, love, and righteousness; the creator and controller of the universe; including man, a mortal body and an immortal spirit in the image of God, finite in being, person,

presence, knowledge, power, love, and righteousness; therefore, in relation to God, his fellow man, and righteousness, a sinner.

4. It is fundamental to the name and meaning of Christianity and the Word of God that God became incarnate in Jesus the Christ, the God-Man, very God and real man without sin, Emmanuel, God with us.

5. It is essential to the Word of God and Christianity that Jesus was born, lived, taught, wrought, died, and rose again, because of the needs of man, the sinner; also as a demonstration of God's love for the world; also as a power by the Holy Spirit for righteousness of spiritual character to as many as are persuaded by this love of God in Jesus, and by their own experiences, to partake of life with God so graciously provided.

6. It is the climax of Christianity and the Word of God that Jesus has a Kingdom of Heaven on the earth among men; that he will consummate that kingdom in his own good time and way; that, meanwhile, through the life and devotion of Christians, - all Christians, unitedly, - Christianity is to "disciple the

nations", -to teach all men everywhere to see and accept Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life", -to love God more than self, ~~and~~ neighbor ^{self} as, and do unto and for others as we would have them do unto and for us.

7. Do you approve of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

8. Do you declare that you have sought the ministry from love to God and your fellowmen with a sincere desire to promote God's glory through the Gospel of his Son; and do you promise to be faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel, and the peace and purity of the Church?

The candidate, having assented to these statements of faith and service, shall be deemed worthy of ordination, or reception, and "the presiding minister shall", &c

Topeka, Kansas

David Ramsey Kerr

Topeka, Kansas, R. D. 8, 9-17-25

My Dear Dr. Rogers:

I presented the proposed change of the Form of Government to the Presbytery of Topeka, yesterday. It was recognized very seriously, ordered filed with the Stated Clerk, and distributed, to be further considered at the meeting of Presbytery at Synod in October.

I am very anxious for this to reach Dr. Swearingen as chairman of the Commission so that he will have it at hand for use at the meeting of the Commission if he thinks it wise. I am fearful that mail might not reach him from here before he leaves home, and might miss him.

I, therefore, mail this to you asking your good offices to hand it to Dr. Swearingen for me at your earliest opportunity when you meet at Atlantic City

With best wishes and great interest,

Very truly yours,

David R. Kerr

A MEMORIAL

TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMISSION OF FIFTEEN
PRESENTED BY ITS AUTHOR, DAVID R. KERR, TO THE PRESBYTERY OF
TOPEKA, SEPTEMBER, 26, 1925

ORDERED FILED WITH THE STATED CLERK AND MULTOGRAPHED
AND DISTRIBUTED

MEMORIAL TO THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY'Y COMMISSION OF FIFTEEN

The Presbytery of Topeka in session at the Oakland church, Topeka, Kansas, September 13, 1935, respectfully memorializes the Commission of Fifteen on the Peace and Progress of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., to consider the wisdom of recommending to the General Assembly to overture the Presbyteries to change the Form of Government as to the examination and vows for the ordination and reception of candidates, ministers, elders and deacons, somewhat as follows herewith.

We aver that the proposed change would empower the majority of a Presbytery to accept and effect the ordination or reception of an applicant; but a member of the minority would be privileged to complain to the synod and General Assembly, and the higher courts would have the prerogative of disapproving the judgment of the Presbytery, but not of rescinding the ordination, or reception, nor of excising the Presbytery.

We further aver our belief that these changes proposed comprehend the fundamentals and essentials of our Christian religion and all true beliefs and creeds, that they protect the truths of Christianity and freedom of conscience within the truth, that ~~they~~ under these vows our ministers and officers would be orthodox and loyal, and therefore, ^{these vows} would perforce dispel intolerant disputations, would attract more and stronger young men into our ministry, would promote the unity of denominations, and of Christendom.

We believe that these ordination vows comprehend all true beliefs concerning the being and person of God, all true beliefs as to the birth of Jesus, maintaining his deity and manhood without sin, all true theories as to the life death and resurrection of Christ, all true theories as to ~~the~~ sin, righteousness, and the glorification of human character, and finally the truth as to the purpose, life, and consummation of the Church as interpreted by our Lord in his own words in the two great commandments and the Sermon on the Mount.

PROPOSED FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Shall the Form of Government, Chapter)', "Of the Election and Ordination of Bishops ~~and~~ or Pastors and Evangelists", be changed as follows:

OF THE ORDINATION OR RECEPTION OF MINISTERS AND THEIR INSTALLATION AS EVANGELISTS OR PASTORS:

Section X, second line, strike out: "in that case", and insert therefor: that Presbytery may advise the candidate to the Presbytery of the church which has made the call, or .

Section XI, Strike out the clause: "especially, if in a different Presbytery from that in which the candidate was licensed", and insert instead thereof: or reception of a minister. In the fourth line, insert before the word, philosophy: literature, and insert "philosophy" insert: the sciences; after "languages", insert: as to his knowledge of Christianity and understanding, and acceptance of the ordination vows of the Presbyterian Ministry;

After the clause, "as to the Presbytery shall seem proper", add as follows: concluding these tests with the following question, requiring affirmative

4 answer: Are you now willing to take the vows for the ordained ministry of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America?

Change the next clause, "The Presbytery being fully satisfied with his qualifications for the sacred office", to read: The majority of the Presbytery being satisfied with these tests, and that the candidate understands vital Christianity, and the Constitution of the Presbyterian church and the vows of her ordained ministry, and sincerely accepys these vows, "shall" &c

Section XII, Insert in the second line after, "Presbytery", or its commissio

In the next paragraph, line 2, strike out : "questions, viz.":

Strike out the paragraphs numbered, "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7," and in their stead inset

In the presence of God and these witnesses do you solemnly affirm:

1. It is the foundation of true religion and of Christianity as that religion that in the beginning God was, that he is, and ever continues to be one only true God.

2. Is essential to the Christian religion that God reveals himself in

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 5- creation~~h~~, in providence, in the spirit of man made in the image of God, and in the Bible, which is the Word of God through inspired writers revealing God himself, and man, in all their relations and ways:.

3. It is a fundamental of the Word of God and Christianity that God is a Spirit, - a person, infinite in being, presence, knowledge, power, love, and righteousness; the Creator and Controller of the universe; including man, a mortal body and an immortal spirit in the image of God, finite in being, person, knowledge, power, love, and righteousness; Therefore, in relation to God, his fellow man, and righteousness, a sinner.

4. It is essential to the name and meaning of Christianity and the Word of God, that God became incarnate and revealed himself, his love and plan for man, in Jesus Christ, the God-Man, very God and real man without sin, Emmanuel, God with us.

5. It is essential to the Word of God and Christianity that Jesus was born, lived, taught, wrought, suffered, died, and rose again, because of the needs of man, the sinner; also as a demonstration of God's love for the world; also

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as a power by the Holy Spirit for ~~the~~ righteousness of spiritual character to as many as are persuaded by this love of God in Jesus, and by their own experiences, to partake of life with God so graciously provided.

6. It is the climax of the Word of God, of Christianity, and of God's plan, that Jesus has a Kingdom of Heaven on earth among men; that he will consummate that Kingdom in his own good time and way; that, meanwhile, through the life and righteous activity of Christians, -all Christians, unitedly, everywhere, -Christianity shall "disciple the nations", -teach all people to the ends of the earth, to accept Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life"; to love God more than selves, neighbors as selves, and to do unto others as they would that others do to them.

7. Do you approve the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and while a minister therein do you pledge loyalty to the Constitution thereof, and do you promise subjection to the Presbytery of which you may be a member?

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Q. Do you declare that you have sought the ministry from love to God and your fellowmen with desire to promote God's glory through the Gospel of ~~the~~ Jesus Christ; and do you promise to be faithful in maintaining the truth of that Gospel, and the peace, prosperity, and purity of the church?

OF LICENSING CANDIDATES

Form of Government, Chapter XIV, Section IV., Line 4, strike out: "the Latin language", and insert instead thereof: literature, and the original languages in which the Holy Scriptures were written, and as to knowledge and belief of the Bible as the Word of God;

Strike ^{out} paragraph or line "1."

Change the number of paragraph "2" to 1.

Change the number of paragraph "3" to 2, and to read: An expository discourse on several verses of Scripture, and ;

Change the number of paragraph "4" to 3, and to read: A gospel sermon;

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Section V. After "exercises" in the first line insert: and tests ;

After "piety" in the third line strike out, "literature", and insert:
scholarship, beliefs ;

At the end of the fourth line strike out, "lecture", and insert: expository
discourse ; and from the fifth line strike ^{out} "popular", and insert : gospel;

Section VI. Strike from the fifth line all following the word "course", and
insert: for the Bachelor's degree, and having at least two years in a The olog-
ical institution, or its equivalent;

Section VII. Following "trials" in the first line insert: as to: piety, expe-
rience, and motive ;

Strike out paragraphs "1, 2, 3, 4," and insert the following questions:

1. Do you believe that God was in the beginning, that he is, and ever continues
to be the one only true God?

2. Do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God, - God's revelation of
himself, and man, in all their relations and ways?

9. 3. Do you believe that God has provided in Jesus Christ a way and a power for the immortal happiness of ^{man} as a spiritual being?

4. Do you now desire and resolve ^{to give} yourself wholly to the preparation and offices of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?

OF ELECTING ORDAINING AND INSTALLING RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS

Shall Form of Government, Chapter XIII, be changed as follows:

Section §' IV, Strike out paragraphs "1, 2, 3, 4, 5" and insert therefor:

1. Do you believe in the only true God, the Father of all, and in Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life, and in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter?

2. Do you believe in the church as God's instrument, through its life and the Christian activity of its members and the cooperation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, by which your community and the world is to be prepared for eternal life?

10 3. Do you approve of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and while an elder therein (or deacon) do you pledge loyalty to the Constitution thereof, and your endeavor to promote the peace, unity, and efficiency of the church at home and everywhere?

4. Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon) in this church, and promise to perform faithfully the duties thereof?

Henry S. Coffin

1124

"PHANTOM HEIGHT"
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NEW YORK

RECEIVED

Aug. 8th 1925.

J 1 1925

My dear Robert,

Speer

ack
8/2/25

Have you already seen the enclosed? It has been passed both by the Assembly and the Presbyteries of the U.F. Church, and is now the legal formula of subscription. If the Committee of Fifteen could bring a similar formula to our Church, our troubles would be over. Evangelical principles and convictions are safeguarded with that reasonable freedom of interpretation which is Protestant Christianity.

Cordially yours,

Henry S. Coffin

Trinity Presbyterian Church
SOUTH ORANGE, N. J.
REV. VICTOR HERBERT LUKENS, PASTOR
20 GROVE ROAD

No 1

Greensboro, Vt.

Aug. 21, 1925.

Rev. A. . Barr.D.D.

Greensboro, Vt.

Dear Allie:-

With regard to the General Assembly's Commission on the State of the Church, of which you are a member I am glad to say, I have asked myself often this question, "What is the real source of the controversy which has troubled our Church since before the ^{Ordinance Act 1729} Ordinance of 1787."

It seems to me that the source is not persons, for though in the ¹⁴⁵ 150 years since ¹⁹²⁹ 1787 the persons have constantly changed, the controversy has continued.

Nor is the source in the "new theology", nor in the Biblical criticism of our day, for, to me, they are simply the present characteristics of the old controversy.

It seems to me that the real source of the long continued controversy is a thing, viz, the form of subscription required of candidates for licensure and for ordination to the ministry, and for ordination to the diaconate or to the eldership.

My thought therefore is that it will not permanently avail to make moves for the conciliation of persons, or for the compromising of various personal points of view, but that a radical revision should be made of the form of subscription -

2.

and made in such a method that its acceptance or rejection shall be by the Presbyteries and not by the General Assembly.

The form of the subscription requires the candidate to affirm his belief that the Scriptures are the "only infallible rule of faith and practice". Is not this word "infallible" one of the sources of the controversy? I note in the Confession of Faith, Chapter I, Section II, last sentence, "All which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life". Here the word "infallible" is omitted.

Again I note in the Confession of Faith, Chapter I, Section VI, that "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life" is set down in Scripture or may be deduced therefrom.

It seems to me therefore that in the form of subscription the word "infallible" in the first place goes beyond the words found in the Confession; and in the second place opens the way for one man to declare that another, in giving assent to the form of subscription has affirmed his belief in the inerrancy of the Scriptures.

I think also, secondly, that a source of the continuing controversy lies in the second affirmation of the subscription, namely, that about the Confession of Faith containing the "system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures".

It seems to me that if this long controverted statement were removed from the form of subscription we would really move in the direction of removing the source of disagreement in our

3.

Church.

I pray that you and the others who have been honored by the Church in the high task presented to your Commission may open a new day for our Church.

Believe me to be,

Ever your friend,

Victor Herbert Lukens.

REV. BENJAMIN MCKEE GEMMILL, PH.D., D.D.
STATED CLERK
HARTSVILLE, PENNA.

REV. WILLIAM A. JONES, D. D.
PERMANENT CLERK
PITTSBURGH, PENNA.

THE SYNOD OF PENNSYLVANIA

Aug. 24, 1925

My dear Bro:-

I want to direct your attention to what I believe ought to be reported by your Committee of 15. You will find in New Digest 1861, on page 499 a circular letter to the churches which adapted by you to the present situation covers present conditions as nothing else can do. If I were on your Committee I would vote for some such statement as that letter embodies and let it go at that, inasmuch as that would clarify the atmosphere and set the church right in the eyes of the world.

- 1. Com. of names
- 2. ~~Should you~~ ^{would} ~~publish~~ ^{clarify} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~circ.~~ ^{the} ~~letter.~~ ^{the} ~~It is of great importance~~
- 3. ~~The~~ ^{would} ~~circulated~~ ^{clarify} ~~papers~~
- 4. ~~The~~ ^{would} ~~value~~ ^{clarify} ~~of~~

Yours very truly
Benj. M. Gemmill.

- A report.
- 1. Causes & position clearly stated
- 2. Proposals for same
- 3. Details for books, ~~copy~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 4. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 5. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 6. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 7. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 8. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 9. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 10. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 11. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 12. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 13. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 14. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}
- 15. ~~Letter~~ ^{copy} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~letter~~ ^{letter} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~committee~~ ^{committee}

Should we refer copy to the publisher?

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

OFFICE OF THE MODERATOR

MODERATOR
CHARLES R. ERDMAN, D.D., LL.D.
PRINCETON, N. J.

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JOHN M. T. FINNEY, M.D.
BALTIMORE, MD.

TREASURER
LAND TITLE AND TRUST CO.
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

August 25, 1925.

My dear Dr. Speer:-

Learning that the enclosed statement is to be submitted to the Commission of Fifteen appointed by the General Assembly of 1925, I have secured copies which I am sending in advance to each member of the Commission that you may have an opportunity of giving careful consideration to the problems it presents in advance of the first meeting of the Commission, which is to be held at Atlantic City on September the 22nd. Very kindly regard this advance copy as a matter of strict confidence until its contents becomes public through some other channel.

Thanking you for your cooperation in the important tasks devolving upon the Commission, I am,

Yours very sincerely,



Dr. Robert E. Speer,

New York City.

JOHN J. MOMENT,
CHAIRMAN
ROBERT HASTINGS NICHOLS,
SECRETARY
GEORGE H. RICHARDS,
TREASURER

COMMITTEE ON PROTESTANT LIBERTIES
IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
10 NELSON STREET, AUBURN, N. Y.

Explanatory Note

The paper addressed "To the Commission of Fifteen", to a copy of which this paper is attached, has been prepared, with a view to submission to this Commission, by the Committee on Protestant Liberties in the Presbyterian Church. This body was formed immediately after the decision of the last General Assembly in the case of the Synod of New York. The paper is a statement of the Committee's views on constitutional and legal questions involved in the present situation in our church. At Dr. Erdman's request, advanced copies of it are now supplied, for the members of the Commission.

The Committee on Protestant Liberties has asked to be allowed to appear by representatives before the Commission appointed by the Moderator, and present its views regarding the situation in our church. If this is allowed, the representatives of the Committee will gladly give the Commission any information in their possession, should this be desired of them. At its appearance before the Commission, if this takes place, the Committee hopes to submit formally the accompanying statement, and argue its constitutional and legal contentions. There are other aspects of the matter which seem to the committee most important to the welfare of our church, and the committee hopes to be allowed to present its views on these subjects also.

It will be observed that the Committee's statement speaks of signers. The Committee has intended to seek only a few signatures, lest it should be thought to be provoking controversy. It is already assured of the signatures of about a hundred prominent ministers and elders; and copies of the statement bearing these names will shortly be sent to the members of the Commission. The committee would be glad, however, to endeavor to secure a large number of signers, in order to show how widely its views are held in our church.

Robert Hastings Nichols
Secretary

L. P. JUVET

12 COOLIDGE AVE.

W

GLENS FALLS, N. Y.

Sept 7 1925

Rev. Dr Lapsley A Mc Afee

Dear Sir!

Let me hope that the little paper enclosed will not be without interest to you in your preparations for your Atlantic City Search for the Truth!

Respectfully yours

L P Juvet

Referred to No 1

4614 Fieldston Road,
New York City.

September 7, 1925.

Rec. Charles R. Erdman, D.D.,
Lake Placid,
New York.

My dear Dr. Erdman:-

In response to your request through Dr. Mudge I am sending herewith some suggestions as to procedure.

In preparing this I found myself going on to write a Survey of the Situation, or an outline of the questions that are likely to come before the Commission. I wrote this (Paper "B") for my own benefit. I hope that there is no impropriety in sending you a copy (enclosed).

My thought about Recommendations is that they should be for moral effect rather than for compulsion. Considering the origin of this Commission and the expectation of the church toward it, it seems to me that the Commission may wield considerable influence in the next Assembly, with a reasonable and appealing Report, that avoids extremes, and bases its conclusions on the Constitution, the History of the church, and Christian Policy for our times.

For example, on the Virgin Birth, if we decide to make a recommendation about it, I hope that we can conserve the doctrine, but take it out of the field of controversy. I could not write such a Recommendation now, but I think that it can be written.

The situation under the Judicial Decision of the Last Assembly, cannot be viewed otherwise than as serious.

I hope to attend Morris and Orange Presbytery on Tuesday of next week.

With warm regards,

Sincerely yours,

Edg. Whitaker Work.

Paper "A"

Procedure of the
Commission of Fifteen

The Commission was appointed for two purposes:-

First. To Study

- (a) the present spiritual condition of our Church.
- (b) and the causes making for unrest.

Second. To Report (to next Assembly)

It is implied that the Report will include Recommendations.

N.B.

The Recommendations shall be curative, constructive, protective and progressive, as is indicated - "to the end that the purity, peace, unity and progress of the Church may be assured". It is assumed by the terms of its appointment that the Commission will seek after Peace, and the cessation of controversy. Properly speaking the Commission is a non-partizan body. It is appointed to study.

Operations of the Commission.

First. Prayer. Yes, much prayer! Not casual prayer - but "prayer in the Holy Spirit". If the Commission can be pervaded by a spirit of searching and supplication!

Second. Open discussion in the Commission. Exchange of views and information.

Third. Consideration of documents, reports, publications, etc.

Fourth. Examination of the Constitution of the Church.

Fifth. Examination of Acts of the Assembly, pertaining to these subjects.

Sixth. Hearing of representatives of Presbyteries and others whom the Commission may summon to testify.

Seventh. Sub-Committees. Some of the work will have to be done by sub-committees.

N. B. It may be wise to have a Committee on Report and Recommendations early at work (of which chairman of the Commission shall be chairman).

N. B. The Report when completed should cover

- (1) A report on the spiritual condition of our Church.
- (2) A report on causes making for unrest.
- (3) A report on recommendations which in the judgment of the Commission tend to peace and progress.

Paper "B"Survey of the Situation.

Below is submitted an analysis of the subjects involved.
These topics all bear upon the spiritual condition and unrest of the church.

1. The Church and its Government.

Rights of Presbyteries. Rights of Assemblies. How far may Presbyteries go in judging of qualifications of students? How far may Assembly go in enacting deliverances affecting terms of ordination, etc? To what extent may General Assembly exercise right of review and control?

N.B. Probably the heart of the difficulty lies here. Should our Constitution be made more specific on these points?

N.B. Where does the decision of last Assembly leave us? (Compare Judicial Decisions of 1924 and 1925).

2. The Church and its Confession.

More especially - Ministers and the Confession.
Examine terms of subscription.
Origin of conservative and liberal is at this point.
Existence of two schools not new or anomalous.
No ethical insincerity in exercising just liberty.

N.B. Historically the Presbyterian Church has always admitted reasonable liberty. Not to do so would mean intellectual suicide.

N.B. The specific question here is the Inclusive Church. The Commission should study carefully the question. Is it a menace or otherwise?

3. The Modernist or Liberal Movement.

As this is supposed to be the main cause of unrest, the Commission should study it.

What does it mean?

What does it propose?

What is its spirit?

Is it disloyal to the Bible?

Is it disloyal to Christ?

Are they who sympathize with it in whole or in part rebels against Presbyterian doctrine and government?

Is the movement materialistic, agnostic, anti-supernatural, anti-Christian, etc?

4. Partizan Bitterness in the Church.

This is Found On both sides. denunciation and
Commission should take notice of acts of personal calumny as a source of unrest. (Some of these acts would be libelous in the eyes of a Civil Court).

Is there evidence of misrepresentation? (The Commission may summon witnesses).

Is there evidence of diligent fomenting of discord?

Is there a stream or habit of controversy in our church which some are aiding instead of checking?

N.B. Would it be possible to persuade the Church to deal calmly and fraternally with its differences? At least steps must be taken to stop the trial of men in good and regular standing in newspaper courts.

*Emphasize
on Study
Report*

5. The Principle of Toleration.

Is this principle recognized in our Constitution?

Is it applicable at the present time?

Can the Presbyterian Church afford to neglect its use?

N.B. The question here is as to the real genius of the Presbyterian Church. It cannot be made either liberal or fundamentalist. It is neither broad nor narrow. Historically and actually it is a church that allows liberties within the Confession and the Word of God.

6. The Disunion of the Church.

This is serious cause of unrest.

Study carefully past separations in the Presbyterian Church.

Were they useful? Could they have been avoided?

Is there ground for disunion at present?

What would it accomplish?

N.B. It is to be hoped that the Commission will set its face like a flint against all thought of disunion.

7. Modern Science and the Scientific Method.

Another serious cause of disturbance.

What position shall the Presbyterian Church take toward Science?

Can it afford to put itself in apparent opposition to reverent scientific study?

Would it be true to genius of Presbyterianism to take a stand against evolution?

Might it not be a serious dilemma for the church in this scientific age to commit itself to an attitude of unfriendliness toward scientific progress?

N.B. In what position has the recent evolution trial left us?

N.B. Is it wise for the church to compel opposition to evolution by administrative action? "Compulsion often is the way to lose".

N.B. Can the church ignore the aspirations and attitudes of men who are investigating the natural world?

8. Specific Issues.(1) Inerrant Bible.

Many hold that disagreement on this subject is the actual source of present controversy.

This is actually not taught either in Bible or Confession.

N.B. Is it ethically correct to state that it is so taught?

(2) Virgin Birth.

This a doctrine both of Bible and Confession.

For generations the church has held it as a "holy mystery".

It is a thousand pities that it has become an "issue".

If it were possible to vacate the controversy at this point and call the church back to its age-long attitude of reticent reverence and silent acquiescence in the doctrine of the virgin birth, much trouble would be over.

N.B. As this matter now stands (due to deliverances of Assembly and to last judicial decision, 1925,) the Presbyterian Church is already in a serious dilemma on this subject.

Thus - It has permitted this holy mystery to become a theological issue, and has forthwith declared that there is but one possible attitude toward the issue. (This is an act of intellectual compulsion that may have serious consequences.

*Original
Submission
in NY*

C. W. Hooper

Paper "B" Sheet #3.

The church has said in other words that the fate of Christianity rests upon a subject which receives relatively little attention in the New Testament, and "with respect to which men of good character and principles may differ".
(God help us to clear the air on this subject!)

(3) Resurrection.

The actual question here is frequently overlooked. The fact of the Resurrection of Christ is not questioned. It is the mode that is under discussion.

Why should this be a serious cause of division among us?

(4) Licensing and Ordaining Candidates for the Ministry.

(By parity of reasoning, also elders and deacons).

The case of New York Presbytery comes up here.

But other Presbyteries are in the same case.

Because of this problem the General Assembly was induced to adopt its plan of declaring "essential doctrines".

N.B. Can this method be trusted as wise in the long run?

Also - is it strictly constitutional?

N.B. There is a serious question as to whether our present ordaining formulae are the best available. Does our method of handling students justify itself? (Attention called to the serious decline in candidates etc.)

N.B. What the United Free Church of Scotland is doing along this line.

(9) The Lord's Test. - "By their fruits".

The fact that this has been so often forgotten in the present controversy has given rise to much distrust. Is it not true that Christian fruits are found on both sides?

Fundamentalist Christianity produces faithful Christians: so also does Liberal Christianity.

N.B. May not the line or ground of mediation in our present troubles be found at the point of experience? The fighting of old battles that can never be won will go on and on (if we will permit it). Meantime - the real question is whether there is a valid Christian experience being achieved in the churches. Is Christ at work in his church through the Spirit?

(10) Christian Policy.

There must be a true Christian Policy for such a time as this.

What is this Policy in the light of all the facts?

What is the course of true spiritual statesmanship?

The following considerations are of great weight in formulating a truly Christian Policy for the Church.

- (a) No sacrifice of truth or of the real integrity of Presbyterianism.
- (b) Nevertheless a way of approach, of understanding and of just compromise must be sought.
- (c) Acknowledge diversities, but emphasize unities.
- (d) Era of distrust should give place to charity and mutual confidence in the Lord, realizing that the Spirit of God has many operations.
- (e) Calm consideration of the needs of our day, and of the necessity the church should feel to meet them (Especially the highly-trained youth of to-day.)
- (f) Realize the unwisdom and danger of extremes.

Paper "B" Sheet #4.

- (g) Solemn inquiry into the question: What are the mind and spirit of Christ for such times?
- (h) Solemn consideration of the operations of grace in the New Testament Church. (Acts 4:33. "great grace was upon them all".)

N.B. May it not be that an era of love and brotherly kindness would be the end of controversy?

If the Presbyterian Church had grace enough at the present time to vacate this controversy, to resolve highly to bring it to an end, what a miracle of God it would be!

Is it not true that the leading mistakes of the church have been made in its handling of controversy?

Let us therefore seek earnestly for a true Christian Policy for this time.

2801 Regent St

Berkeley Cal

Sept 10 1925

Rev. E. A. McAfee D.D.

No 1

My Dear Doctor

I sat through the long session of the Gen Assembly at Washington D.C. when Chas Briggs was tried. The prosecution was bitter, doing as much harm by its spirit as Briggs was doing by his lewdness and the danger of Briggs was over-magnified as the sequel proved, for he became conservative or at least ceased to be a disturbing factor. All the tense feeling and exaggerated statements were for nothing. It seemed to me they did harm rather than good.

Ever since that time there have been leaders in New York who have been at the head of one party, so called liberals, connected with Union Seminary. Dr Tom Hall, Henry Sloan Coffin have been among the leaders of that party. These men, sustained by the sentiment of the New York Presbytery have been like a red rag to a bull with Kennedy, McCartney, Macken and the others, of opposing views. I have no sympathy with Coffin and his following; I have no approval of licensing men who do not accept without evasion the system of doctrine taught in our Confession, but I think we are apt to paint the danger of their leadership in too much red. The worst part of the controversy is just as it was in the Briggs trial, instead of discussing in a kindly way differences of teaching the personal element is injected and animosity is awakened. One who has come in close touch with Coffin in his Church, seen him in his pulpit with his service for children and for adults cannot think of him as a dangerous man.

2

1:39

The only cure for this feature of the Cause of
merest, in my judgment, is to have the love of God
shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
in other words a time of refreshing from the
presence of the Lord.

Another thing tending to discontent, it seems to
me, is that for a number of years, we have
been constantly tinkering with our church
machinery, never an Assembly but some
new plan is proposed and adopted and before
we get a chance to learn how to work the
plan its changed again. Men get confused
and disgusted and balk. Cant we have a
few years now to try out our present plans?

Personally I feel that one
vital mistake is being made. That discourages
the reliable members of the Church, God
makes preaching the super agency in the
spreading of the gospel. The demand of the
times is changing this. The sermon is regarded
as secondary. The minister is expected to lead in
so many things he has little time for his study.
These many things may be important but should
not be loaded ~~upon~~ ~~the~~ ~~minister~~.

But there is a personal, face to face preaching
which characterized the early Church that does not
characterize our time. Instead of ministering to the
people in their homes we are going to society meetings,
Club meetings & functions, in such a large way that
there is no time for the other. I speak of this as a
ground of discontent because the attempt to do
God's work in ways which we think an improve-
ment over his ways always result in disadvan-
tage and discontent. Truly yours, R.M. Stevenson

Sept. 10 / 20
1:40



Reference to
No 1

N. G. Moore

Memo. for Committee.

1: The "unrest" mentioned in the resolution of the General Assembly relates to questions of belief, or at least of emphasis, as to the doctrines essential to Presbyterianism as a system.

2: These affect only the ministry, for the membership, as such, are not called upon to hold any doctrines not common to christians of any denomination. (See 2 Digest, pp.71, 89.)

3: The same in essence is true of the elders and deacons, who only profess a "general approval". (2 Digest, p.81.)

4: But the church, as a whole, comprises them all.

5: So it is assumed that the doctrinal differences among the ministers

-2-

have created the prevailing "unrest" in the whole church.

6: Therefore this Committee is to investigate, and to recommend some method of correcting or allaying this unrest among the ministers, for the purpose of promoting the peace of the church as a whole.

7: The differences in question relate chiefly to these points:

(a) The interpretation of the scripture, including the nature and extent of inspiration; also the meaning and bearing of the accepted standards of presbyterianism.

(b) The emphasis to be placed on certain passages, so as to furnish an acceptable, or at least controlling, criterion of Presbyterian doctrine.

-3-

(c) The authority and credibility of the miracles narrated in one or more of the gospels.

(d) The nature and character of the resurrection of the Lord, and also of christians dying in the faith.

Assuming then that among our ten thousand ministers there are differences of view as to these questions, (with others less marked), all proclaiming and believing themselves to be evangelical and scriptural, and also soundly presbyterian, what can the committee recommend, to promote peace.

In the nature of things this must apply differently to the present and the future. Dealing first with present conditions,-

-4-

It is manifest that as to each point of difference only one view, if truly ascertained, is correct, and all others are erroneous; and as the Committee cannot impute improper motives, but must presume sincerity and good faith, those who would find themselves in error, if an infallible criterion could be found, would frankly admit it, and change.

It is also manifest that the church itself cannot control the operations of the human mind, or guarantee to all its ministers correct mental operations.

It is also manifest that a mere majority vote, even in the General Assembly, cannot provide such an infalli-

ble criterion, chiefly because its voting constituents vary from year to year; and also because if it cannot convince its own minority it cannot hope to satisfy the sincere doubts or pre-judgments of those holding opposite opinions. Thus the judgment of the majority contains the same elements of doubt and difference as before.

It is also historical that the existence of these differences among its own constituents has always been known to and recognized by the church. They existed while the new school was a separate body; and also while the Cumberland church was a separate body; yet their ministers were not only invited to join us, notwithstanding these, but the General Assembly itself, in each instance, voted that the systems of doctrine and differences of view which

-8-

prevailed in these bodies were in substance like our own: (2 Digest, pp. 38, 51, 52, 71, 72, 78).

These things are made plain by that action,- at least as to present conditions,- first, that having invited them into our fellowship, with the assurance that their difference of view was not a hindrance, we are not now at liberty to invite them out, or their successors; and second, that we cannot justify a distinction against those of our own original company, who adopt similar views; and third, that it would not be consistent to contend that our ministry must not only sincerely accept our standards, but must, on peril of their status, interpret them alike.

-7-

It is also manifest that there is no way of ousting mere members, nor even elders or deacons, from the church, for they are not called upon to assert themselves on matters of doctrine, and cannot be guilty of heresy. Therefore pressure by the majority can only be used upon the ministry.

The foregoing taken to be true, what is it practicable to do? The following seem to be the only alternatives:

(a) Individual ministers may be ejected, on a standard created by the General Assembly, and ultimately it might be expected that only those who remain would be expected to conform to that standard. This may turn out otherwise, for ultimately the membership, which is always free from these

-8-

obligations, will control the General Assembly, and may create a different standard.

(b) It seems to be supposed by some that by a kind of proclamation or declaration, (probably by the General Assembly), all those ministers not conforming to such an announced standard should, on a certain event, become and be expelled from the church, ipso facto, and cease to have any rights or privileges as presbyterians.

But this would be revolutionary, if it were possible; and if effective would leave churches and congregations without pastors; while still nominally presbyterian. This would create more trouble than it would cure.

-9-

(c) We may deal with them as God does,- with patience and forbearance, hoping that the common evangelical ground on which they all stand, and which, by inviting members, we ourselves aver to be sufficient to save the world, will prove sufficient to justify their ministry.

(d) As to those who are to be hereafter received into the Presbyterian ministry, it is of course practicable for the subsisting church, although by a majority only, to fix a test or criterion, to which the minority, though of a different opinion, must bow.

The standards of the church may obviously be that criterion, and

-10-

it can only be applied to the qualifications of new candidates for the ministry. That it should be so applied, if its meaning were clear, will probably not be denied, for the General Assembly, directly or indirectly, is the only practical authority to specify such requirements; but the construction of those standards, and the rigidity of their application, would still furnish a basis for disputation, which a General Assembly ultimately must settle. The heat of discussion heretofore has centered at this point; but it seems to me that its chief bitterness has arisen from the feeling that the subsisting ministry is already arrayed in hostile factions. I think it is shown above that this is not true.

-11-

Despite differences of view the present ministers are on an equal footing of function and privilege, and not only should but must concede to each other, in brotherly regard, an equivalent status. If this be done the next step should be easier; for on questions of judgment and policy the majority must prevail. We are accustomed to living by that rule in every social relation and can do so with frank submission so long as there is no hostile attitude.

Whether the General Assembly shall in advance dictate terms for the reception of new ministers or not seems unimportant, for by direct appeal its judicial function may be invoked with a similar result, as was illustrated in the last Assembly.

-12-

To this the minority,- whatever it be, and whatever view it may hold at the time,- must and can reconcile itself; and it may do so more readily because it has always the right, by discussion or persuasion, to procure, if it can, a change of attitude.

If these views are accepted as correct the frank and kindly effort to promote a friendly approach is the thing most to be desired, and most confidently to be expected.

THE PRESBYTERIAN
1217 MARKET STREET, PHILADELPHIA
EDITORIAL ROOMS

September 11, 1925.

Dear Dr. Erdman:-

Your letter requesting information for the special commission of 1925 in reference to the nature of "Modernism", the extent of "Modernism" and instances of "Modernism" in the Presbyterian Church came duly to hand and I would reply as follows:-

1. As to the nature of "Modernism."

"Modernism" is a misnomer. It is modern in no sense but is a fact of ancient and continuous History, more or less appearing in all ages but in this present age it appears with greater intensity, determination and universality than ever before. Its proper name is "Cultured Paganism". It has appeared and does now appear in different forms and under different names. It appeared in Israel under the form of Baalism. It appeared in the early centuries under the name of Gnosticism. It appears in later centuries under teachings of such men as Renan, Diderot, Rousseau, Parker, Paine, Ingersol, etc. Using the present day name "Modernism" after its kind has no common principles or doctrine. Its only common characteristic is the denial of the revelation and the Deity of Christ. Gnosticism united in refusing to believe in the Old Testament Scriptures and the God of those Scriptures but no two Gnostics agree as to just ^{what} the Old Testament was.

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(2)

So today "Modernism" has no common principles or faith. It denies all authority external to the individual and so in matters of Faith, the personal reason and experience is the only authority and in practice every man is a law unto himself. The only point in common is Antagonism to the revelation from God in the Scriptures and to the Diety and sacrificial substitutionary work and death of Christ. As to the particular value of the Scriptures and to the particular character of Christ there is no agreement. "Modernism" is essentially old-fashioned Paganism with some modification of form and as such it is held and propogated today by individuals within the Presbyterian Church, U.S. A.

2. As to the extent of "Modernism" it appears in every Continent, in almost every nation and people, in every Christian denomination, in every state of our homeland and in almost every mission field in the foreign land. The Presbyterian Church, U. S.A. has not escaped its presence and while the greater part of this church is loyal to the Holy Scriptures, Christ and ^{the} Gospel revealed therein, yet a very general voice is heard in opposition to these Scriptures as the very Word of God. It is not here necessary nor desirable to be personal. One desiring to obtain names can do so by familiarizing himself with the religious literature and religious institutions and religious utterances of our time. Such published articles as "The Evolutionist at Calvary", various sermons heard and read and frequent utterances such as these, "Genesis is only a bundle of inspired myths (a Presbyterian, U.S.A) The death of Jesus Christ has no

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(3)

forensic power. It is like the death of any other good man (Presbyterian minister) etc. together with statements in our official literature such as this, the Virgin Birth is not important or it is a myth, etc. etc. All of these make it plain that the expression of "Modernism" and the names of the men teaching it have become common place. No intelligent man will question the presence of "Modernism" in the pulpit, schools, other institutions, and the literature of the Presbyterian Church, today. It would require pages to present specific cases.

This "Modernism" is not constructive but destructive, intensely so. It cannot be met by the hiding, timid prophets fed on bread and water. It requires the Spirit and Power of Elijah. If the Presbyterian Church in particular or the Evangelical Church in general lies down before this destructive force of Paganism then we may look for the sorrow and suffering and judgment of other centuries. If your commission is to take up this question of "Modernism" they will find it intense, universal, burdensome and perilous.

Sincerely yours,

D. S. Kennedy

Berkeley Cal 9/13/1925

Dear Dr McAffee -

No 1

As you asked us at last wednesday's prayer meeting, to give you our ideas as to the present unrest in the Church I obey orders -

When a young man on the cattle range of the south west - sometimes when the day was cloudy and no sunshine, or ^{not} anything to tell the directions, I would look at my compass, and if the compass was followed it took me out of my dilemma - otherwise if I doubted the compass I was lost.

The trouble with the Presbyterians

(2)

Church, as well as the other churches,
 is that so many of our preachers,
 and officers; as well as so many
 members doubt the compass. The
 Holy Bible - so many have been
 inducted into the ministry and
 into official positions who were not
 true to the faith, and the funda-
 mentals of the Christian faith, that
 it is impossible for those who are
 to feel comfortable; and the unrest
 will continue as long as the idea
 of "peace at any price" is continued.

Mr Lincoln said "this country cannot
 endure half bond and half free"
 either, can the church of the living
 God.

Do not for one moment think that all of the members of the Church, are going to have their money go to support infidel teachers or infidel missionaries, or in some cases super-annuated ministers who doubt any portion of God's Word. Have long halt ye between two opinions." In 2^d Tim - 4-4. "and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be wonned unto fables." Also Jno 2 - 4th + 10th ... "If there ^{any} come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house; neither bid him God speed". We were taught to believe the Bible from lid to lid at our mother's knee, and when we are told that parts

4

if it are not divinely inspired, we
 are going to stand up for the truth
 regardless of consequences. The Bible
is our compass for time and for
 eternity, and any who doubt it,
 are the enemies of the cross of Christ,

Yours in Him for that truth -
 Edw. R. Worth

1159

CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS ASSOCIATION'S DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I. We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as verbally inspired of God, and inerrant in the original writings, and that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and life.

II. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

III. We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary, and is true God and true man.

IV. We believe that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also that spiritual death which is separation from God; and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature, and, in the case of those who reach moral responsibility, become sinners in thought, word and deed.

V. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice; and that all that believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.

VI. We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, in His ascension into heaven, and in His present life there for us, as High Priest and Advocate.

VII. We believe in "that blessed hope," the personal, premillennial and imminent return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

VIII. We believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God.

IX. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting felicity of the saved and the everlasting conscious punishment of the lost.

(Fill out and sign the following blank and send to Christian Fundamentals Association, 1020 Harmon Place, Minneapolis, Minn.)

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Name 

Address

Denomination

Justin W. Nixon

The Brick Presbyterian Church

North Fitzhugh and Allen Streets



Pastor Emeritus
William R. Taylor

Ministers
Justin W. Nixon
C. B. F. Hallock
Raymond H. Sanford

OL

Rochester, N. Y.

RECEIVED

SEP 24 1925

Mr. Speer

September 23, 1925.

Rev. Robert E. Speer, D. D.
156 Fifth Ave.
New York City

My dear Dr. Speere

Among the letters which I received in connection with the article I wrote in the September "Atlantic", was one from Rev. Mebane Ramsey, one of the complainant minority of the New York Presbytery. That letter was so sympathetic and at the same time so firm and candid in its statement of the conservative's position, that I felt that the least I could do would be to reply to him as far as possible in the same spirit.

I am inclosing my reply to Dr. Ramsey for your personal information with the thought that perhaps it has some bearing upon the great problem which your commission upon the unrest in our church is facing. You are at liberty to use this letter of mine in any way that you wish. The only thing confidential about it is the name of the individual to whom it is sent.

With the hope and the prayer that you may have Divine guidance in the deliberations of your commission, I am

Fraternally yours,

Justin W. Nixon

The Brick Presbyterian Church

North Fitzhugh and Allen Streets



Pastor Emeritus

William R. Taylor

Ministers

Justin W. Nixon

G. H. Hallork

Raymond H. Sanford

RECEIVED

SEP 21 1925

Mr. Speer

Rochester, N. Y.

September 23, 1925.

Rev. Mebane Ramsey
280 Bement Ave. West New Brighton
Staten Island, New York

My dear Brother Ramsey:

I am indeed grateful for your cordial and discriminating letter of September first. It breathes the spirit of sincere loyalty to Christ and of devotion to the truth which I find in the great majority of my conservative brethren and which makes me long for their fellowship even when I may not secure their approval. Such a letter as yours comes from a realm of Christian experience where both conservatives and liberals find themselves speaking the same language. The unfortunate fact is that the controversy has focused the attention of both groups upon the points where they differ to the corresponding neglect of the areas of agreement.

For instance, I agree thoroughly with you that there must be an objective basis for the gospel in history. The problem is to determine the particular set of facts which constitutes that objective basis. Do we ~~not~~ find that objective basis in the moral and spiritual revelation and achievement of Jesus Christ, in His life, death and resurrection and in His continuous sway over the souls of men as a living force? Or must we require in addition an attestation of Christ's divine character and mission by miraculous occurrences in the physical sphere? So far as I am familiar with the liberal position, liberals are not disposed either to affirm or to deny events of this type and they differ among themselves as to the historicity of various miracles. They do feel however that to make a requirement today of belief in the historicity of this or that miracle a test of fellowship in any church calling itself Christian, distorts the emphasis of the gospel and gives a sinful and needy world a false impression of God's revelation of Himself in Christ. The New Testament age was an age of miracles in the heathen world but there was only one figure whose spiritual majesty could inaugurate a spiritual revolution in human life. His power is the same yesterday, today and forever and is available to us, as to His followers in the days of His flesh. "Greater things than these shall you do". "I will be with you always."

Rev. Mebane Ramsey #2

Now I may be presuming but I am confident that you will sympathize with the intent of the above statement, even though the logic seems to you to be weak. You may feel, however, that to admit, in any respect, the unessential nature of the miraculous in the physical sphere, jeopardizes confidence in the historic record by which we acquire faith in the regenerating power of Christ in the moral and spiritual sphere. I feel that the greater peril is to insist upon the indissoluble unity of belief in the physically miraculous and of vital faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. But you may be right and I may be wrong. I am sure only of this that faith in Christ and the experience of His redeeming power are deeper down in the gospel than the reasons men give for their faith

Our theological difficulties seem ultimately to arise out of the problem of reconciling the transcendence and the immanence of God. The liberals, as Bishop Gore rightly points out, tend under modern influences to start their thinking with the immanence of God. The conservatives start with His transcendence. But let me assure you of this. In his inner religious life the liberal is as keenly aware of the transcendence of God as is the conservative. He knows that the belief in the transcendence of God, in His actual working in history, in His revelation of Himself to men in immediate experiences, in His personal accessibility to every needy soul-- the liberal knows that this belief goes to the very heart of the gospel. He may not see how all the implications of the immanence and the transcendence of God are reconcilable in one theological system, but he feels that neither of these great truths can be given up. The fact seems to be that the truth of the gospel is always greater than the particular aspect of it which any one of us emphasizes, which fact makes it all the more imperative that we seek to retain a diversity of expression and interpretation within the same church. We grow in our own knowledge of our Lord through the visions which other men have of Him

I know that the task of securing unity in diversity is not an easy one. The christian life has never been easy to profess. Men have never died for an easy gospel.

My hope has been that as we became conscious of the great tide of materialistic thought which threatens all the values of the moral world as they have not been threatened for generations, we might all of us gather about our Lord in such humility and hunger of soul that He might give us new light upon our differences within the church. We cannot meet the world's need by argument nor can we convince one another by arguments. Only by an appropriation of His life, a richer and purer incarnation of His passion and a new increment of His power may we secure either the unity of His church or the redemption of a broken humanity.

Rev. Mebane Ramsey #3

To divide His church still further and that by majority votes in assemblies where all of us admit the sincere faith of all our brethren in our one Lord and Savior and this in the face of a haughty and contemptuous materialism which rejoices in such evidences of our frailty---this seems to me a fearful responsibility to assume. I cannot say that this division ought not to take place. That is implying a knowledge of God's mysterious working which I do not profess. I shall say, however, with full conviction that such a division ought not to take place until all of us, conservatives and liberals, have had the opportunity to feel out and to appreciate the faith of our brethren on levels of thought and purpose deeper down than those upon which our controversy is now conducted. Perhaps we might find there a common faith as glorious and as imperial as it is now unrecognized and unpracticed. Perhaps He has brought us to this hour for such a discovery on our part and such a revelation upon His. May we not in every way possible provide for our Lord such an opportunity for self disclosure. After such an effort, if division comes, it will come with agony and tears and without hate and bitterness.

Again let me thank you for the candid and generous spirit which prompted your letter. I sincerely hope that one of these days we shall be able to talk about these things face to face.

Cordially yours,

*with letter of
Commission
9/15*

September 26, 1925.

Winters

Mr. John T. Apgar,
262 . 23rd Street,
New York City.

Dear Brother Apgar,

Your letter of September 24th addressed
to the Special Commission of the Presbyterian
Church in the U. S. A. is duly received. At
the next meeting of the Commission, it will be
presented.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Stated Clerk.

J. T. & H. APGAR

OUR Latest Improved Patented Adjustable Artificial Limbs are Scientifically Made of Rawhide, Leather and Aluminum. Natural in Motion, Easily Controlled, Non-irritating, a Perfect Fit Guaranteed. Recommended by Physicians as the Best.

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Sept. '15

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The Man Behind The
Apgar Artificial Limb

262 WEST 23RD STREET
NEAR EIGHTH AVENUE

NEW YORK, September 24th, 1925

Presbyterian Board. General Assembly.
% Dr L.S.Mudge.
Atlantic City. N.J.

Dear Brother,ⁱⁿ Christ:-

If you want to have the unrest that is among the people to day through out the world to be stop. you lay down Cread and Doctrine among all denomination and all denomination to become the Lord people, and for all denomination to worship Jesus Christ in their hearts and minds.

And all Pastors to preach God word and then your unrest will stop, and the house of God will befiled with his spirit, and we will all be the Lord people peace and good will towards all men and women. And I trust that the spirit of Jesus Christ may enlighten your minds of this truth is my Prayer.

I remain yours in Christ.

John T. Apgar

Lewis S. Mudge

1166

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MODERATOR
CHARLES R. ERDMAN, D.D., LL.D.
PRINCETON, N. J.

514 WITHERSPOON BUILDING
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

STATED CLERK
LEWIS S. MUDGE, D.D., LL.D.
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

VICE-MODERATOR
JOHN M. T. FINNEY, M.D.
BALTIMORE, MD.

TREASURER
LAND TITLE AND TRUST CO.
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Sept. 30, 1925.

RECEIVED

OCT 1 - 1925

Mr. Speer

Dr. Robert E. Speer,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Bobby,

Your letter forwarded to me under date of September 28th is just received. I am not at all sure that any inquiry is needed to answer in the affirmative, the query you raise. There is no question at all that our Church is liable to the control of the minority. Indeed, so far as the General Assembly is concerned, it is in the constant control of the minority. An overwhelming number of our Presbyteries are relatively small bodies. There are Presbyteries, the communicant membership of which is no larger than that of a good-sized city church. Not to go further into detail, may I refer you to General Assembly Minutes 1924, page 154, where this matter is referred to. The report, of which this page is a part, was one behind which I threw my whole influence.

I am profoundly of the conviction that communicant membership, plus ministerial membership in the Presbytery, should be the unit upon which is based our representation in the General Assembly. Your lines of inquiry seem to me to be well worth following, however, though they would bring to light the precise facts and give definite basis for convictions already formed.

I will forward your letter to Dr. Swearingen and ask his judgment as to which of our Committees it had better be referred to.

It was good to see you at Atlantic City. My conviction grows that the healing influence of time will be the most potent factor in our present situation and that if the Special Commission can hold off decisions, this will bring with it salutary results.

With kind regards, believe me

Yours sincerely,

Lewis S. Mudge
stated Clerk.

Lewis S Mudge

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

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RECEIVED

OCT 3 - 1925

Mr. Speer

October 2, 1925.

91

John M. T. Finney
John " "

Dr. Robert E. Speer,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York City.

My dear Bobby,

Referring to your recent letter to me under date of September twenty-eighth about "Minorities," enclosed you will find some interesting facts gathered by Mr. Barraclough.

With warmest personal regards, believe me

Ever affectionately yours,

Lewis S. Mudge
Secretary.

IN THE ASSEMBLY

A certain combination of seventy five Presbyteries can obtain a vote of four hundred and sixty, sufficient to carry at any time.

A majority vote of 460 can also be obtained by a certain 217 Presbyteries representing only 4219 ministers and less than 700,000 communicants.

VOTING ON OVERTURES

ADMINISTRATIVE

150 Presbyteries can get a majority representing only 2242 ministers and less than 350,000 communicants.

VOTING ON DOCTRINAL OVERTURES

200 Presbyteries can get a majority representing only 3589 ministers, and less than 650,000 communicants.

Henry C. Swearingen

1169

Rec. 10/13/25

House of Hope Presbyterian Church

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

October 8, 1925

Robert E. Speer, D.D.,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York City, N. Y.

My dear Dr. Speer:-

Thank you for your gracious letter of October 5th. I have been planning to do the very thing you suggest. Some material has come already, principally a communication from Dr. Snowden which I am enclosing herewith. I share your view that time will prove the principal factor in the solution of our difficulties. Meanwhile such a searching study of the whole question as is contemplated by the Commission will have a very important bearing on the outcome.

Most cordially yours,



Henry Chapman Swearingen

HCS:LD

The Western Theological Seminary
Department of Systematic Theology
723 Ridge Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa.

October 5, 1925.

Rev. Dr. Henry C. Swearingen,
St. Paul, Minn.

My dear Dr. Swearingen:

As your Commission has invited expressions of opinion as to present conditions in our church I venture to send you my humble contribution to the subject.

The chief difficulty as regards polity relates to a difference of view as to the power of the presbytery in licensing candidates for the ministry. In Chapter XIV, of the Form of Government, various preliminary examinations of the candidate are prescribed, and then in Section 5 it is stated: "These, or other similar exercises, at the discretion of the presbytery, shall be exhibited until they shall have obtained satisfaction as to the candidate's piety, literature, and aptness to teach in the churches."

Section 7 then states: "If the presbytery be satisfied with his trials, they shall then proceed to license him in the following manner: The moderator shall propose to him the following questions, " these questions being not the questions of the presbytery, but the four official questions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. It is then further stated that "the candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative" the moderator shall offer a prayer and address the candidate and then "record shall be made of the licensure."

The licensure thus consists of two parts, first, the preliminary examination as to piety and learning with which the presbytery is to be "satisfied," and, second, the examination of the candidate by the Presbyterian Church through its four official questions.

The uncertainty and difficulty in the present situation grow out of difference of opinion as to whether this preliminary examination which the Form of Government twice says is to give "satisfaction" to the presbytery, is subject to the review and control of the Synod and General Assembly, or is it final with the presbytery, only the examination by the four official questions of the Presbyterian Church being subject to review and control. Some presbyteries have been apparently proceeding on the assumption that the preliminary examination is only for the "satisfaction" of the presbytery and is therefore final with it and that only the second examination by the official questions is subject to review.

-2-

The whole of Chapter XIV seems to imply that the preliminary examination is only for the satisfaction of the presbytery and that any candidate who answers the four official questions "in the affirmative" is thereby automatically entitled to license and "record of the licensure shall be made."

This ambiguity could be removed by the insertion in Chapter XIV, Section 7, of an amendment which would make this point clear so that it would read as follows: "VII. If the presbytery be satisfied with these preliminary examinations, its judgment in these matters being final, they shall then proceed to license him in the following manner: The Moderator shall propose to him the following questions: viz."

If your Commission would propose this amendment as an overture to be sent down to the presbyteries and it should be adopted in the constitutional way, it would remove uncertainty on this point. The presbytery would have final jurisdiction in the matters which are subject to its "satisfaction" and the Synod and General Assembly would have final jurisdiction over the official examination by the Presbyterian Church itself.

Very respectfully yours,

(Signed) James H. Snowden

The Western Theological Seminary
Department of Systematic Theology
723 Ridge Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa.

October 5, 1925.

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St. Paul, Minn.

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The Western Theological Seminary
Department of Systematic Theology
223 Ridge Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa.

October 5, 1925.

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The Western Theological Seminary
 Department of Systematic Theology
 723 Ridge Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa.

II

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The Western Theological Seminary
 Department of Systematic Theology
 723 Ridge Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa.

III

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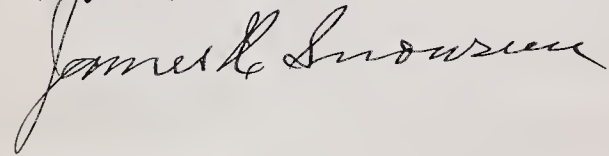
The Western Theological Seminary
Department of Systematic Theology
722 Ridge Avenue, Pittsburg, Pa.

IV

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Very respectfully yours,



Rec. 10/14/25

1.72

HARRY CLAYTON ROGERS, D. D.
MINISTER

Harry C. Rogers
Linwood Presbyterian Church
KANSAS CITY, MO.

FROM WOODLAND TO MICHIGAN
ON LINWOOD BOULEVARD



"WHATEVER YOUR PROBLEM
WE PROMISE TO HELP"

EVERYTHING "FOR CHRIST
AND THE CHURCH"

October 10, 1925

Dr. Robert E. Speer
156 Fifth Avenue
New York City

Dear Dr. Speer:

Since returning from our meeting in Atlantic City, I have been increasingly convinced that if we could bring about an adjustment on the one doctrine of the virgin birth, we would go far toward allaying the fever in the church. The revelation of this teaching seems undoubtedly to be in the New Testament record and I think the more liberal men agree to this although they may feel that it is of later origin. To accept this theory of later origin would, in my mind, bring about a fragmentary New Testament and thereby institute a larger problem. In my own judgment, the plain revelation in the New Testament incorporates the entire story of the supernatural birth of our Lord and I am writing you confidentially to see if it might not be possible to get the men who disagree with this position reconciled to it. Their refusal to affirm it is essentially a denial of it and raises a very drastic question as to the authority of the New Testament. There are, of course, many side lines of this matter that I have not the opportunity now to go over with you but I have raised what in my judgment is the immediate question and would be most happy to have you write me your considerations of it.

I wish it were possible for the church to persuade you to stand for the nomination of Moderator at the next General Assembly as I feel confident of your election and then of the very widest use of your powers to the church in this her time of need.

of friendship, I am,

With great respect and assurances

Very cordially yours,

HCR:ER

Harry Clayton Rogers

Wm M. Curry

RECEIVED

OCT 15 1925

Ninth Presbyterian Church

William Melville Curry, D.D., Minister

Philadelphia, Pa.

The Rev.

Mr. Speer

842 S. Fifty-seventh Street

October 12 1925.

Robert E. Speer, LL.D.
156 Fifth Avenue
New York City.

My Dear Dr. Speer:-

I have your letter of October 9th concerning the document I sent to you; the interview with Dr. Francis L. Patton.

I realized at once the value of the material Dr. Patton was giving me and I wrote it out immediately on returning to the hotel. The revision he sent to me is in his own hand-writing and he even supplied the definition of "an essential doctrine" by Spinoza which I don't believe any man but a Patton could remember more than 24 hours.

I wrote to Dr. Patton and urged him to let me use the interview but he replied again that he would rather it would be considered confidential. He said in his letter that if he published that sort of thing, the church would say that he had gone back, in his old age, on all that he had stood for. But he quickly added, "I have not gone back. This is what I always stood for".

If it comes to a crisis when that document would be of benefit to the Church of Christ, I would not refuse its use to your Committee. Dr. Erdman read the interview as corrected by Dr. Patton. It describes exactly my own position. That position is most offensive to the present Philadelphia Presbytery majority as I have discovered in the last two years.

It might be that Dr. Patton would, at your request, release that interview. I have been offered money for it by some of the metropolitan newspapers who learned of it at the Grand Rapids Assembly. But of course that paper is not for sale. With great appreciation, I am

Sincerely yours,

Wm M. Curry

C*J.

Nathan B Moore

1180

LAW OFFICES
CUTTING, MOORE & SIDLEY
11 SOUTH LA SALLE STREET
TELEPHONE STATE 5400
CHICAGO

Williams & Thompson, 1866-1888
Williams, Holt & Wheeler, 1888-1899
Holt, Wheeler & Sidley, 1899-1913
Holt, Cutting & Sidley, 1913-1919

Charles S. Cutting
Nathan C. Moore
William P. Sidley
Donald F. McPherson
William D. Barnes
Dwight Dickerson
Edwin C. Austin

572
October 19, 1925.

REIVED

OCT 21 1925

Dr. Robert F. Speer,
156 Fifth Ave, **Speer**
New York, N. Y.

Dear Sir:-

Hoping to contribute something helpful to the conclusion our Commission plans to reach I have prepared and send you herewith for your consideration the following:

First: A Brief of Points and Authorities, taken chiefly from our Digests, in respect to existing fixed conditions which I suppose we cannot seriously hope to change. This, if correct, will make a background or starting point for our action. I have marked this No. 1 among the papers I send you, and would be glad to have you read this attentively before going to the others.

Second: I send you a copy of the "Analysis" I had previously prepared for my own guidance, and which I read to the Commission at its last meeting. On further reflection it still seems to me to be correct, and I can see no other conclusion as far as it goes. It lacked however an important feature, in view of the information contained in my "Brief", and this I have added as a supplement. After carefully considering the Brief I would request that you read and consider this paper, which, as next in order, I have marked No. 2.

Third: I have drafted, - tentatively, of course, - my notion of possible action, (as part of the whole), by the General Assembly, and this I have marked No. 3. It should be read and considered after the other two, which are intended to pave the way for it.

Please take these as suggestions only. They are not intended otherwise. Of course I am not myself finally committed to any of them, but am quite open to other plans.

Yours very truly,

P.S. I have tried to frame the Resolution so that no one claiming to be Presbyterian could refuse to vote for it.



RECEIVED

NOV 2 1925

Mr. Speer

H. R. Mackintosh

1181

81 Colinton Road, Edinburgh

22 October 1925

Dear Dr Speer,

Dr Cairns has passed on to me your letter to him, in which you ask for information with respect to the terms of ministerial subscription in the United Free Church of Scotland.

I am posting to you along with this ⁽¹⁾ a copy ⁽¹⁾ of the Preamble and Questions used at the Induction or Ordination of a Minister, Professor, or Elder, as also at the licensing of a Student. They are all virtually identical in terms. (2) A copy of our Declaratory Act of 1892, which is referred to in the Preamble, and is still the law of the Church in our communion. These are all the documents you need to form your own considered judgement on our situation. You will be able to decide, after reading them, in what essential respects your practice differs from ours. Your Church on more than one occasion, I believe, amended the Westminster Confession itself; our Church took the more general method of passing a Declaratory Act which left much to the Church's own power of definition.

With us the Assembly is undoubtedly the final authority with regard to the terms on which men are licensed or ordained. The Presbytery of course applies the terms of subscription which the Assembly has laid down, but it would not be within its province or authority to alter these terms. At the same time, it is in the highest degree improbable that the Assembly would instruct Presbyteries to make any special doctrines the subject of particular inquiry, or to treat certain answers to them as essential to license of Ordination.

You may possibly find interest in two other documents which I enclose. One is a Brief Statement of the Church's Faith which was laid on the table of our Assembly in 1921, the other a somewhat interesting Report, dated 1924, on the attitude towards the Westminster Confession of the Presbyterian Churches of the world.

Believe me, dear Dr Speer, with high esteem,

Yours very sincerely,

H.R. Mackintosh

HARRY CLAYTON ROGERS, D. D.
MINISTER

Harry Clayton Rogers
Linwood Presbyterian Church
KANSAS CITY, MO.

1:82
FROM WOODLAND TO MICHIGAN
ON LINWOOD BOULEVARD

RECEIVED

OCT 26 1925

Mr. Speer

"WHATEVER YOUR PROBLEM
WE PROMISE TO HELP"



EVERYTHING "FOR CHRIST
AND THE CHURCH"

October 22, 1925

Dr. Robert E. Speer
156 Fifth Avenue
New York City

Dear Dr. Speer:

I thought I had returned to you the copy of Dr. Patton's letter. I do not find it here among my papers today and trust that I have returned it to you. I wrote Dr. Curry anyway to forward you the original of Dr. Patton's letter. I am sorry if I have inconvenienced you and hope that Dr. Patton's original document will reach you shortly from Dr. Curry's office. If you do not receive it, a letter from you to Dr. Curry will bring it over at once.

I am sending you a letter from one of our younger ministers in the West which I consider very interesting. It is not necessary to return it. I have read with interest the letter of Mr. Gates and I am enclosing it.

After rereading on yesterday Dr. Coffin's sermon preached during the last General Assembly, I am confident that no one could have stated more completely the whole round of doctrine with the single exception of the Virgin Birth. I find myself absolutely unable to proceed against any man who holds as much of the complete standard of doctrine as Dr. Coffin does but I covet if possible from him some satisfactory adjustment touching the Virgin Birth. #

I am most happy to be able to think with you along the lines of the work of our Commission.

Most cordially,

Harry Clayton Rogers

HCR:FR
Enclosures

Can you not personally get him to write it out?

Westminster Presbyterian Church

JOHN A. McAFEE, Minister
 Huntoon Street and College Avenue
 TOPEKA, KANSAS

October 15, 1925

*with necessary
to return*

Rev. Harry C. Rogers, D.D.,
 Linwood Boulevard Presbyterian Church,
 Kansas City, Missouri.

Dear Dr. Rogers:

The conversation of Saturday evening keeps coming back to me. Whether or not you got the information you wanted I hardly know. I do want you to know that many of us are constantly praying that you men who have been entrusted with such large responsibility may be guided by the Holy Spirit and that you may lead us aright.

Personally I am not at all concerned about the Presbyterian Church but I am tremendously concerned about the Kingdom of God. I suppose that by many of my brethren I am branded as a Liberal in these days when it is so easy to attach names to one's ^{views}. I am constantly trying to get to the truth and take no position from sheer hardheadedness.

I am not at all worried lest I should be put out of the church but I am tremendously anxious over the spirit manifested in some places. I do not find any place that theological positions are the fruits of the Spirit or that the Spirit is the fruit of theological positions. If the great Presbyterian Church said to me with a tremor in its voice and a tear in its eye, that my interpretation of the gospel was not in accordance with the historic position of the church and that it seemed for the best interests of all concerned that my ministry be no longer ^{performed} conducted with the church, I would have for the church only the highest admiration, even though I might be certain the positions were wrong. But when the attack is made in bitterness to drive certain people from the bounds of the church my own heart sinks and a flush of shame comes to my cheeks. A great many of the men so bitterly attack have been my teachers and I know that

Dr. Rogers -2-

whatever their particular theological positions may be, they do manifest the Spirit of Christ, and I think that God can use them as He is using them and I only hope there will ever be a place for them in the great church we all love.

That the Heavenly Father may give to you and the others, who in these crucial days are leading us, a double portion of love and wisdom is, I am sure, the prayer of the church.

Sincerely and cordially yours,

John A. Wages

Leo Alvin Gates

1185

RECEIVED

South Presbyterian Church

1750 SENECA STREET

BUFFALO, N. Y.

October 7, 1935.

PHONE, ABBOTT 3193

OCT 9 - 1925

THE REV. LEO ALVIN GATES, PASTOR
MISS EMMA POST, PASTOR'S ASSISTANT

Mr. Robert E. Speer, D. D.,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York City.

Off

Dear Dr. Speer:

Thank you for your kind letter in acknowledgment of my pamphlet on the Virgin Birth. I am most gratified at the interest you show in the question, and that you feel as I do that this question is within the province of the Commission to study. May I venture some further observations, without burdening you with further correspondence unless I can be of use. I know how busy you are.

It seems to me that to come to a right understanding of the Virgin Birth question demands more than a study of the New Testament as it stands. For myself, I came to the negative position on it years ago from such a study, mostly. Back in 1916 I was asked by Dr. Stanley White to consider several positions with the Foreign Board. One was at Bangkok. I asked for the privilege of corresponding with some of the missionaries of that Mission, and addresses to two of them - apparently brothers - among others, this inquiry; "Would a man who feels that the weight of N. T. evidence is against Virgin Birth be an acceptable member of your Mission?" The reply that came is not pertinent (it was not encouraging) but the question is. I had graduated from the Seminary (Auburn, 1912) accepting this dogma. Had defended it vigorously during my earliest years in the ministry. But I had finally abandoned it because it seemed to me that the weight of N. T. evidence was against it.

But, as I have suggested, an adequate study of the question requires more than a study of the N. T. as it stands. It is necessary to examine it in the process of becoming what it now is. The statements contained therein must be judged against a background of the whole historical development. May I take the liberty to suggest two books whose reading - if you are not already familiar with them - I feel will help you at least to understand those of us who do not accept - or even deny - Virgin Birth. One is Prof. Bacon's "The Making of the New Testament" (Henry Holt); the other Ferris's "The Formation of the N. T." (Griffith and Rowland Press).

Bear with a single illustration. Studying to-night with a class the early chapters of Acts, I was struck with Luke's report of the prayer in 4:24-30. In the closing phrase, Jesus is referred to as God's "holy servant". Supposing that Luke had a verbatim copy of the prayer, and copied it verbatim (a generous assumption), the contrast between such a reference to Jesus and that found in John 3:16 "only begotten son" is quite amazing. Between this way of referring to Jesus in, say, 30 A. D., and "John's" in say, 110 A. D., there is a vast development.

South Presbyterian Church

1780 SENECA STREET
BUFFALO, N. Y.

THE REV. LEO ALVIN GATES, PASTOR
MISS EMMA POST, PASTOR'S ASSISTANT

PHONE, ABBOTT 3193

I do not know whether you would agree with a statement made last May by Dr. Erdman - I heard him make it repeatedly - that the Virgin Birth is not essential. It was hard to resist the temptation to say, "Then why did God do it?" It is difficult - I should say a bit profane - to say that God did so extraordinary a thing, when there was no essential reason for it.

There is one rather shameful omission from my pamphlet, which I should like to supply. In John 1:45, Philip is quoted as saying to Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, Joseph's son". If this Gospel was written by John (as at least the extreme "conservatives" hold) with whom Mary lived after Jesus' death, it seems impossible that he would not here have informed us, at least in a parenthesis, that Philip was wrong about Jesus' parentage. If, on the other hand, it was written later, when the fact of Virgin Birth was commonly known, (ex hypothesi), it seems inexplicably strange that the Gospel contains no reference to Virgin Birth. If known, it apparently was not essential to "John"; if it was an essential fact and dogma, then the earliest Christians were denied knowledge of what was necessary.

I pray earnestly that the Commission may make a great contribution toward the peace, unity, purity, and progress of the Church. You, who find it possible to believe in the sincerity of those who differ with you, are in a position to help mightily.

Cordially yours,

Leo Alvin Gates

Wm M. Curry

Ninth Presbyterian Church

William Melville Curry, D.D., Minister
Philadelphia, Pa.

RECEIVED

The Manse
842 S. Fifty-seventh Street

OCT 24 1925

Mr. Speer

October 23 1925.

Robert E. Speer, LL.D.
156 Fifth Avenue
New York City.

My Dear Dr. Speer;—

Your letter of October 21st reached me this morning enclosing the Patton interview.

I have seen for the last 18 months the value of that Statement of Dr. Patton's in our present church life and I have appealed to him to let it be used. I think he is afraid it will be used in a controversial way by the Liberalists against the Conservatives. The Fundamentalists know that that Statement is in existence and they have appealed to him also. But that Statement is not a controversial paper. He himself said that there is nothing in it but what he has spoken or written in the last 25 years.

I believe Dr. Erdman is the one to write to him and urge upon him the issuing of such a Statement. It would be worth a trip to Bermuda to get a Statement from him. Such a Statement ought to be issued by this Committee, or embodied in the Committee's report. I will write to Dr. Erdman today and suggest this.

I had a letter two or three days ago from Dr. Stevenson asking me for a copy of that interview for confidential use in Princeton. I entrusted him with the original and I also sent him the two letters of which you spoke. They are now in Princeton. Perhaps you will be in touch with Dr. Stevenson in the next few days and can get it from him. In any case I am writing to Dr. Stevenson asking him to send the document to you. It seems a great pity that Dr. Patton's monumental influence might not be used just now. How clear he thinks! And how incisive and statesman's like are his utterances! I am returning to you the carbon copy of the interview on which you may make the corrections made by Dr. Patton.

The position I have occupied here in Philadelphia Presbytery has been most difficult. One of my elders was on the steering Committee of the Fundamentalists and he has conspired with a local politician to make me very serious trouble; so serious indeed that I have asked a Committee of Presbytery to investigate it. Only a little coterie of 10 or 12 people are affected but no telling what may happen. I have done my duty as I saw it and would do it over again with my present information. With very sincere regards I am

Cordially yours,

Wm M. Curry

1.

Confidential

On his invitation, we rode over to spend the afternoon with Dr. Francis Patton and Mrs. Patton on Carberry Hill Hamilton Bermuda. The wind was blowing a gale in our faces, and the bicycles were hard to drive against it, but the trip furnished its profit all along the way. The afternoon proved to be one of the most interesting hours of my life. Mrs. Patton was very delightful and gave us such a welcome. Another Mrs. Patton, a daughter-in-law, was also present in the company; but the delight of the afternoon was Dr. Patton's discourse on the questions of the day. No sooner had we gotten our social adjustments than he asked me about the condition in Philadelphia Presbytery. He was well posted, however, as I discovered. He knew my position in the controversy; thanks to the Presbyterian assailing me and quoting my Pastor's Corner on the theological wrangle. For full an hour and a half, he discussed things with great animation, and when we left he followed us to the foot of the hill. It was truly a great occasion for us.

Dr. Patton was not talking to us for publication. He regarded it, and so do I, as between us alone. He said, however, everything he was saying was already in print, and anybody might know where he stands in this present controversy. On coming back to the hotel that Tuesday evening, Lawrence and I wrote out the following statements which he made. I want to write them down to have in my position for they are great principles.

"The General Assembly has no mandatory authority in matters of doctrine."

"Supposing the Premillenarians should gain control of an Assembly, and suppose that Assembly should pass a resolution that premillenarianism is an essential doctrine! Would I be bound by that deliverance? Most certainly not. Nor would I need to leave the Presbyterian church because I refused this mandate."

"Suppose Matthew and Luke had not mentioned the Virgin birth! Would I have any less the fact of the Incarnation? If Matthew and Luke had not told that story, nobody would have suspected the Virgin birth."

"We might have divinity without miraculous conception, and we might have miraculous conception without divinity."

"It is silly to say that one cannot be a Christian who denies the Virgin birth. It is in no sense a determining doctrine. Supposing it should be shown that the story is of later origin. I do not think it is. But if it was, would that invalidate the gospel? Most certainly not."

"The great miracle of the scripture is the resurrection of Christ. That is a determining fact. Paul said, 'If Christ be not raised then is our preaching vain; and our faith is vain.' That cannot be said about any other miracle or fact."

Differences of opinion in regard to the nature and extent of inspiration have existed in our Church as long as I have known it.

"The word inerrancy has no place in our standards. It was never contemplated. ~~It is a word to derive out of liberty. It is not taught in the scriptures; nor is it in our standards.~~"

"You have no right to go beyond a man's statement of his belief. If he says he believes in the Deity of Jesus, no man has a right to insist on any peculiar view about it which some may hold. Who can comprehend the Trinity? Or set down its terms and conditions?"

"I have accepted the Westminster Confession as containing the system of doctrine of the holy scripture. No man shall interpret that system of doctrine for me; nor shall any Assembly."

"It is a fundamental fact of Presbyterianism that no rule shall be binding unless voted on by the presby- teries. That fact goes back to the very foundation of the system."

"Your position in the Presbytery is perfectly sound. It is the position I occupy myself. Dr. Macartney is theo- logically right, but he is ecclesiastically wrong."

"If they cut New York Presbytery off, it will be a great mistake. It will be the beginning of litigation and sorrow."

"They think, although they have not told me so, that when they throw the Liberals out, the Southern church and the United Presbyterian church will come knocking at the door and they will again have a great church. Those churches will not come. They have the same problem we have; only not so advanced."

"They tell me that I am not loyal to my own record. But we must remember that the ~~psychology of today and the conditions of today are entirely different from times gone by.~~"

"Disunion will be a fatal mistake. It will ruin the prestige of the church. I am against it."

"It is a large contract Philadelphia Presbytery is undertaking. It cannot be done. But the attempt will divide churches and families and friends. Ah! it is a fatal mistake."

"An Assembly is not a constant or continuous body. Jones is elected this year and Smith next year. They vote with scant information and under the spell of passion."

"It is absurd and childish to call the Assembly the supreme court of the church."

"The union with the Cumberland's broadened the theolog- ical foundation of the church greatly. I opposed that union, and for that reason. After the union of the two churches, there was a different foundation. ~~Our Confession now is virtually and really the Brief Statement.~~"

"Stand your ground, and don't let anybody drive you into the Liberal camp."

"I think beyond any doubt that the men who are oppos- ing this idea of disunion are as orthodox as Dr. Kennely, himself."

"~~Speaking of the Feltick case, you cannot insist to a Session when it is within its constitutional rights.~~"

"The General Assembly has no inquisitorial powers. The very suggestion is hateful. Have they forgotten the principles of the Reformation?"

Present psychological condition in our Church and in the Council of Agents are entirely different from what they were in former times.

Assembly may contradict the mandate of a presbytery body. What then?

Don't mention about the Brief Statement. It's just a do and that's it. I'll see it.

I may have said something like this but I do not recall it
3. I said I was speaking from a family memory.

1:90

~~"I have often said in my lectures that hierarchy is not a doctrine of the scriptures or of our standards."~~

"In my lecture delivered 25 years ago on the Reunion, I called attention to the doctrine of liberty. The Reunion was on the standards simply, but it was understood on both sides that each was to interpret them as he chose."

Certain make of
viewing, studying and
explaining doctrine
to be freely called
in the united Church
This course referred
only to former oppo-
sition between N. O.
& S. W.

"I wrote Dr. Macartney my position on the large contract he was undertaking, and told him I was not in sympathy."

"I love Dr. Machen. He is my boy! But I have told him ^{I speak affec-} he had no right to set traps to catch men only to steal ^{timidly} ^{him} ^{away} ^{their} ^{liberties."}

"I would write definitely of my position, but they would say he is in his dotage and gone back on all he ever taught. The truth is, I have always stood where I stand now."

"Why do they not use their imaginations? Why do they not read church history?"

"Take the opening chapter of Genesis! It is a marvelous revelation. It was written by an impressionist under the inspiration of God. Spiritual men of every age have understood it. But because some one adopts certain theories of interpretation, is he therefore not a Christian? Why! it is too absurd to discuss."

"I was dead against Bryan's legislation before the last Assembly. It had no place there."

"That do you mean by an essential doctrine? (Here Dr. Patton quoted Spinoza's definition which I do not recall.) After quoting Spinoza, Dr. Patton resumed: "Is that what you mean by an essential doctrine? It is absurd to say that the Virgin Birth is an essential doctrine."

"By the same way they
I mean that without
what the thing and
which they pretend to
they can never be con-
sistent"

~~"I am a verbal inspiration is not a doctrine of the Presbyterian church. It is not found in the scriptures."~~

"I opposed the union with the Cumberland church on doctrinal grounds. The Cumberland confession is an Arminian document. The Cumberland brethren did not renunciate it. The union was accomplished on the basis of the Brief Statement. When the union was consummated the Presbyterian church broadened her doctrinal standards. I took my dose then."

"I don't say that I is not
a doctrine of the Church but
I do say that it is an in-
ference, an inference
from the doctrine taught in
the standards"

"I have read the Presbyterian for more than 50 years. My first published article was in the Presbyterian. But some of the statements in the Presbyterian are very crude and brutal."

Not in the
Statement
K. P.

A prominent minister in Phila. said

~~"Dr. Kennedy requested me to correct a statement some one had made as from me; and I replied that I had been correctly reported substantially."~~

"Do not be discouraged. I too am a 'Heretic' from Dr. Kennedy's point of view."

"Dr. McLeod, who stood by me in my position for doctrinal integrity, and in whom I have entire confidence, told me that Dr. Woodlick was sound on the deity of Christ."

"It must be taken for granted that a man is theologically sound who subscribes to the Westminster standards. To go behind a man's own statement brings the utmost confusion. ~~The General Assembly itself has declared that a man's statement must be accepted.~~"

But recall that I said this

"If I say that I receive those standards when I do not receive them, I should be tried for mendacity; not for heresy."

"I am nearer a supralapsarian than any other man I know in the Presbyterian ministry."

~~"Dr. Kennedy has tried to get a statement from me in support of their position. He knows very well how I feel."~~

Dr. K. has never approached me on any of the moral questions

Not in the original statement

"I sometimes feel like a coward that I do not make a clear statement in this matter."

"The General Assembly may, if it wishes, give me pious advice. But I may or may not accept it. I am a Presbyterian."

"The Romanist says: 'I believe in the authority of the scriptures.' And so he does. But he believes in the authority of the church too."

"The men of the Reformation in trying to get reforms of life and doctrine in the church failed; and then they appealed to the higher court. They said: 'We appeal to the scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith and life.' The church has not spiritual authority from the protestant point of view."

For Dr. Speer

C O P Y

Warnock, Bermuda
30th May, 1924

Dear Dr. Curry:

I received your letter and Mr. Laning's argument last night. I have read the argument twice and carefully.

I cannot say whether if I had time, strength, and opportunity to consider the whole question I should in the end of such a study be in full accord with the paper referred to. Mr. Laning will understand me when I say my opinion of his paper must be considered in view of the fact that I have not access to the documentary sources to which he refers and by which it is possible that my opinion might be modified.

But I can candidly say that the views expressed in the paper are precisely those which I have always held and I should have to contradict my own attitude for fifty years if I were to take any other view today. To me with my present light the argument of the paper is complete and unanswerable. It does full justice to the powers of the General Assembly and in its loyalty to the supreme judicatory of our Church is faultless.

It has seemed to me best, owing to my age, remoteness from the scene of action, and lack of documentary material, to abstain altogether from this controversy, and I do not wish at this late date to enter into this debate, but I belong, as you well know, to the conservative wing of our Church. I believe too that there are those in our Church who do not hold our theology but I also think that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to get at the root of our difficulty by any procedure within the constitutional power of our Assembly. I grieve over the fact that there seems to be a growing defection in ours, as in all Churches, in the fundamental truths of Christianity. I give full credit to the motives which are influencing those who are leading in the present agitation, but it is never right to prosecute good ends by illegal means. In other words it is never right to do wrong.

This is a confidential letter and you will so regard it. I know nothing as yet what was done by the Assembly. The Presbyterian of the 22nd gives me no information, but I am waiting anxiously for definite knowledge of what the Assembly did.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) Francis L. Paton

C O P Y

Bermuda
9th May, 1924

My dear Dr. Curry:

Your kind letter with its enclosure reached me yesterday. It was a great pleasure to my wife and myself to see you at Carberry Hill and we enjoyed your visit and are glad to know that you and your son were so well pleased with Bermuda.

I fear that I talked unadvisedly with my lips in the very frank conversation I had with you. I had no idea that you would do more than remember some of it and I confess it rather startled me to see your typewritten report. In most of it I recognize my own words. In some cases you have inadvertently slipped some of your own phrases used in our colloquy in your report of what I said. This, of course, is not strange, nor is it any fault of yours.

But you know I have purposely kept out of this controversy from the beginning. Some of my warmest friends are conducting this debate. I am theologically, as everybody knows, on their side of the debate. I hold a view of the General Assembly different from theirs. I doubt the efficiency of the remedy they propose for the epidemic of scepticism in our Church. I doubt the power of the General Assembly to make authoritative additions to the terms of ministerial fellowship without the consent of the Presbyteries (at least a majority of them), and I fear the issue, instead of being a doctrinal debate, will be an issue of liberty, so that many who are quite orthodox may be misjudged because of the stand they take on the powers of the General Assembly.

I deplore the prospective division to which this discussion may lead and I foresee greater evils as the outcome than would result by bearing only those that we have. This is a great time to read the parable of the "tares." Let them grow together until the harvest would make a good text for the Moderator's sermon.

I have made myself perhaps a little plainer than I did in the off-hand words of our conversation, but you will please regard this letter, as well as the interview we had, as strictly confidential, and I beg you on no account to let it go beyond yourself.

I had carefully considered my position when I decided to take no part in this controversy but I might as well - rather better - print an independent article as to allow myself to speak in the report of an unstudied and extemporaneous conversation.

I am sure you will guard my confidence scrupulously. Thank you for your report of your visit to Bermuda in your bulletin.

Very truly yours,
(Signed) Francis L. Paton

N. G. Moore

LAW OFFICES
CUTTING, MOORE & SIDLEY11 SOUTH LA SALLE STREET
TELEPHONE STATE 5400
CHICAGOWilliams & Thompson, 1866-1888
Williams, Holt & Wheeler, 1888-1899
Holt, Wheeler & Sidley, 1899-1943
Holt, Cutting & Sidley, 1943-1949Charles S. Cutting
Nathan G. Moore
William F. Sidley
Donald F. McPherson
William D. Bangs
Dwight Dickerson
Edwin C. Austin

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OCT 29 1925

Mr. Speer

October 26, 1925.

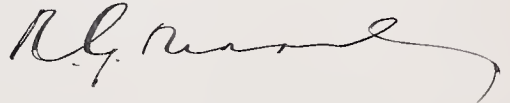
Dr. Robert E. Speer,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

My dear Sir:-

I am writing to-day a letter to Dr. Rogers in reference to the suggestions I made and forwarded heretofore to each commissioner.

I think it may help to make more clear my views if I send to each of the commissioners also a copy of my letter to Dr. Rogers, which may be taken as a supplement to my previous communication.

Yours very truly,



Encl.

COPY

Chicago, October 26, 1925.

Rev. Harry C. Rogers, D. D.,
 Linwood Presbyterian Church,
 Kansas City, Missouri.

My dear Doctor:-

Perhaps I should be a little more explicit in stating my present mental attitude on questions before our Commission. The following will perhaps help to explain the lines along which my mind has moved in preparing the suggestions I sent you and the other members of the Commission recently:

1: The governing function of our Commission, as I understand it, is to promote peace, and obtain mutual cooperation in the work of the church, in a brotherly spirit, recognizing human infirmities, both mental and temperamental.

2: It seems to me that any election by our Commission to define doctrine, and make such a definition conclusive, would not tend to promote peace, but rather to create still greater contention, and intensify the factional spirit.

3: It seems to me impossible to state or define doctrines in any such manner as to obtain general consent. It seems to me much more likely to produce harmony and to reach a result in which all can concur if we indicate that while the church as a whole stands by its standards of faith and order, it does not insist that all shall interpret them alike. It appears to me to have been settled long ago that differences of view within the church, not inconsistent with a debatable interpretation of our standards, are provided for in the system itself, and that if this can be made entirely clear as the present position of the church, the existing causes of dispute and particularly of angry dispute will be removed.

4: It seems plain to me that both factions in the present case are right in some respects and wrong in others. If the Commission were to take a position with either of them, and line up on either side, it would not only make a favorable result of the work impossible, but it would itself thus combine both right and wrong.

5: The doctrine of the virgin's birth, which you mention, is explicitly stated in the deliverances of the Assembly in 1910 and 1916 and again in 1922 and 1924. This however of itself is again modified by the doctrine I take to be essential, - i.e., - that those who differ about the meaning of passages of scripture, involving that and other questions in dispute, but still adhering to the scripture itself as supreme authority,

Rev. Harry C. Rogers, D. D. -2-

are within their rights as presbyterians, although they may reach wrong conclusions.

6: I believe that now the great body of the church, including the great body of the ministers who hold to their individual views of the meaning of the Scriptures as the standard on any subject, find themselves quite able to get along in a brotherly spirit with other members and ministers who have different views. This is on the necessary assumption that all are equally sincere and all believe themselves to be holding firmly not only to the Scriptures themselves but the standards of the church.

7: Since by experience we find it practicable to respect each other personally, notwithstanding these differences of view, why cannot we say so as a church? I think the great majority of members and ministers would welcome gladly such a position if no principle is abandoned, and if we should assume in the church as we do in society that it is our function to convince those who disagree of their error, but not to punish them for being mistaken.

8: Personally I am conservative, as you probably know. There are a good many views expressed by ministers and members of the church with which I cannot concur. I have in my own family three distinct points of view on this subject. One is a very rigid, determined and positive fundamentalist. I am conservative, but assert my privilege of construction. Another member, actively and successfully engaged in church work and Sunday School teaching, has a somewhat different view from mine as to the interpretation of the Scriptures, not denying their inspiration, but adhering as I do to the ultimate end of reasoning, both mine and theirs. These are as earnest christians as I am, and I suppose would have an equivalent right with mine as to who should be ousted by reason of such disagreements. I have never felt that I should break with them because we differ. I still retain my own views, notwithstanding these differences, because to me they are convincing, but I recognize the fact that other members of my family, with equal facilities for judging, have not been able to reach my conclusions. What I think best to do in my family, I think best to do in the church.

9: I am firmly convinced, however, that even those individuals, or presbyteries which are dominated by those holding views different from mine, while entitled to that judgment, are not entitled to disregard in practice the interpretations of our standards adopted by the General Assembly, in any mode

Rev. Harry C. Rogers, D. D. -3-

within its corporate authority; and as to what falls or does not fall within the range of that authority, I regard their decisions as equally conclusive. Thus all the presbyteries, whatever their dominating views, should conform to the rulings of the General Assembly, duly made, in respect to the admission of ministers, or the other active work of the church, on the ground that the General Assembly has been given that authority, and has always exercised it, and it is now too late to dispute it.

This would leave individuals at liberty to hold their own views, but not at liberty to disregard the conclusions of the law-making power. It seems to me that in view of its long prevailing practice no one can now contend, with any assurance, that the practice of the General Assembly of determining doubtful questions, both of doctrine and authority, is not now the law of the church, whether originally right or wrong, though, by like law, it is subject to be altered in future in the same manner; but if any still think so, they should, and doubtless would, while in the minority, acquiesce.

There are a good many democrats who do not recognize the propriety of acts of Congress or decisions of the courts, and yet frankly and graciously yield their assent in practice, waiting for a time when they hope a different view will prevail.

I can see no reason why in religious circles or with reference to religious matters there should be any difficulty on this point.

Accordingly a re-assertion of these propositions, coupled with the counter-balancing assertion of the right of individual judgment, within the field of debatable interpretation, is all that could be expected to meet the concurrence of those holding their own views, assuming that it is our desire to keep them all in the church, unless they should dissent entirely from our doctrine, and even in dealing with those there is a constitutional method provided.

I think the foregoing will give you a clear view of my opinion as to the only practicable method by which the Commission can possibly secure peace in the church and at the same time unite all factions in the support of its standards and the administration of its work.

I am sending a copy of this letter to each commissioner so that all may have before them the reasons which influenced me, and which may illuminate the subject somewhat.

Rev. Harry C. Rogers, D.D. -4-

I thank you very much for your invitation to come to Kansas City, and should like much indeed to do so, and hope some time it may be possible. I have known of you and your work for a long time, and am now very happy to have made your personal acquaintance, and am so pleased with it that I should like ever so much to have you visit me at my home in Oak Park whenever you can. All of our little group of dissenting theologians will welcome you on your personal merit, and will not feel tempted to cut your visit short because of any differences in view.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) N. G. Moore.

P.S. Perhaps it would be illuminating to expand a little the analogy of my own family to the church. The conditions appear to me much the same. I can do so in this confidential way without hesitation because we are a happy family. We love and respect each other, and do not quarrel with the personal right of each to hold independent judgments. Suppose my fundamentalist son-in-law should combine with me, in the interest of pure doctrine, to expel my more liberal daughter from our fellowship; we would then find ourselves also unable to agree, and to accomplish the same purpose he and I must separate. What then would have been gained? Not peace; we had that and sacrificed it. Not unity, for we would be farther apart than ever. Not the reduction of error, for we would have created three centers of teaching, (two of them erroneous), instead of one; and would have added the element of virulence. Not improved world service, for we would have reduced our facilities, and could not do so much. None of us could talk much about brotherly love, or God's patience. We would have discredited before the world our contention that christianity includes kindness and forbearance, and thus our influence would be decreased. In short we would all be miserable, where before we were measurably contented.

Would not the result be the same if this were a picture of a church instead of a family?

N. G. M.

November 5, 1925

Prof. H. R. McIntosh,
81 Collinton Road,
Edinburgh, Scotland.

My dear Prof. McIntosh:

I am very much obliged indeed for your kind note of October 22nd with its accompanying documents. We shall have copies of these made at once for the use of the Commission appointed by our last General Assembly to study the causes of unrest in our Church and to make report to the next General Assembly.

We are in the midst of very difficult times and one would not venture to say what the outcome will be. I trust that our Church may hold together but there are very deep divisive forces at work. Our problem is not so much a problem of liberty of interpretation of our standards as of attitude toward the historic facts of Christianity. What in principle should be the official attitude of the Church toward this history as a whole and what facts must be regarded as so fundamental that their acceptance by the ministry of the Church may justly be declared to be essential?

The whole issue has been concrete over the question of the Virgin Birth, involving the doctrine of Scripture and the view of the Church with regard to the trustworthiness of the New Testament. If you have any light that you could throw on our problem, or if there are any principles that you can suggest that penetrate to the heart of it, we should be very grateful for them.

With grateful appreciation of your helpful letter and with sincere regard, I am

Very faithfully yours,

RES-KC

Nathan G. Moore

1100

LAW OFFICES
CUTTING, MOORE & SIDLEY
11 SOUTH LA SALLE STREET
TELEPHONE STATE 5400
CHICAGO

Williams & Thompson, 1866-1888
Williams, Holt & Wheeler, 1888-1899
Holt, Wheeler & Sidley, 1899-1913
Holt, Cutting & Sidley, 1913-1919

Charles S. Cutting
Nathan G. Moore
William P. Sidley
Donald F. McPherson
William D. Bengs
Dwight Dickerson
Edwin C. Austin

RECEIVED

NOV 12 1925

Mr. Speer

November 10, 1925.

Dr. Robert F. Speer,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

My dear Doctor:-

At the risk of making too much literature myself, I think it desirable to send to the members of the Commission, supplementary to my previous suggestions, a copy of a letter written to Dr. W. O. Thompson. This is not sent because of any assurance of its importance, but because it relates to the questions discussed in my former communication. I think all the Commissioners should be informed about and have an opportunity to consider suggestions, good and bad, new or old, giving them such weight as they may think they deserve.

Yours very truly,

N. G. Moore

Encl.

RECEIVED

COPY

NOV 12 1925

Mr. Speer

Chicago, November 3, 1925.

Dr. W. O. Thompson,
President Ohio State University,
Columbus, Ohio.

Dear Doctor:-

I duly received yours of October 26, and shall bear in mind your engagement in Chicago during the week of the 16th, and unless unavoidably prevented I will make it a point to meet you at that time.

I beg to say that I quite agree with you that deliverances of the General Assembly cannot change the terms of licensure and ordination; but I think long-prevailing custom has given "deliverances" a standing as an interpretation of church doctrines, for the time being. I do not doubt that the jurisdiction of the presbyteries is original on that subject, but I am equally convinced that an appeal will lie from their action, and that the General Assembly has the right, in dealing with appeals, to determine whether the constitution has been properly applied.

As to deliverances, it strikes me that they are in effect somewhat analogous to the advisory opinions which in some States the Supreme Courts may give, on request of the Governor or Legislature, although there be no litigation pending. By such opinions they advise the Governor of the prevailing doctrines of law, and of the validity, as well as the proper interpretation of the constitution and acts of the Legislature. These do not settle any controversy, but they have a status, and of course an effect as a declaration of the law.

I suppose the making of deliverances by the General Assembly has rarely, if ever, been merely casual. Usually they have been made in answer to an inquiry or overture by a presbytery; sometimes founded on a recommendation of a committee or the judicial commission, but always deliberate. In view of the prevailing custom for nearly two centuries, I feel quite sure that the church can never be induced to regard them as ineffectual. It is quite natural to expect that judicial commissions, in acting upon appeals, and the General Assembly in dealing with reports of that commission, should treat such deliverances as one of the evidences of existing law. I suppose they could not properly be regarded as legislation, and therefore it would not take action of the presbyteries to change them, but a subsequent deliverance by a later Assembly, or decisions on appeal, may lay down a different rule if the sentiment of the Assembly has changed in the meantime.

Dr. W. O. Thompson

-2-

My feeling is that our Commission will find its field of action restricted by fixed conditions, in which it will be impossible to induce the presbyteries to make any significant change, and that it would probably be unwise to try it; and our action must be within the boundaries open to us. We cannot accomplish a miracle.

I do not regard it as either possible or necessary to win to the view of the Commission, whatever it may be, the assent of extremists on either side. It seems to me it would work better, and meet with more general acceptance, if some distinct pressure were put on both extremes, - to compel a fair and considerate view of both phases of the church constitution, - i. e., - that which requires the maintenance of its known doctrines, and also the maintenance of the individual right to interpret the standards. Since both of these are already in the constitution, it would be hard for any one to vote, or to maintain in argument that individuals or groups should be privileged to disregard either. Thus the fundamentalists must be brought to realize that, whether they like it or not, they will not be allowed to ostracize any of their brethren because of such differing views; and the liberal people must realize that they must not disregard the deliverances or decisions of the Assembly, as they then are. To this extent there would be a measure of compulsion on both sides; but this would not be tyranny, but the obligations, assumed in their subscription, to observe all the elements of the constitution. In my view the constitution need not be changed to bring this about.

I hope you will forgive me if I seem too rambling, - perhaps it is because I am growing old.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) N. G. Moore.

Chester A. Herrick

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

GIRARD COLLEGE
PHILADELPHIA

RECEIVED

NOV 13 1925

Mr. Speer

November 12, 1925.

Dr. Robert E. Speer,
Board of Foreign Missions,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York City.

Dear Robert:

There is, I think, a truth expressed by Dean Brown in his book "The Art of Preaching", which you may care to consider for the statement you are making, to be presented to the Commission of Fifteen. On page 123 and 124 of the book in question Dean Brown says that, "Man shall not live by sound doctrine alone, even though the truth contained there in may be incontrovertible."

I have heard not a little preaching from men who uphold the doctrinal gospel, including Drs. Kennedy and Macartney, and Prof. Machen, and I am firm in the belief that this preaching amply warrants the statement of Dean Brown. Without making it personal, I believe, that something along that line ought to be introduced into our report. Men and women are hungering for the bread of life and thirsting for the living water; to turn aside for elaborate discussion of denominational questions and denominational controversy is not unlike giving a stone when bread has been asked for. You will, I believe be able to work this thing so that it may be a constructive and helpful suggestion.

Faithfully yours,

Chester A. Herrick

President

H-C

INDIVIDUAL LIABILITY

BANK OF MITCHELL

Mitchell, Indiana NOV. 16, 1925.

Mr. L. S. Mudge, Stated Clerk,
Witherspoon Bldg.,
Philadelphia, Pa.

My dear Sir:

I observe that a certain commission appointed by the 1925 General Assembly will hold a session on Dec. 1. and that expressions are welcomed from individuals on the causes and possibilities of relief from unrest in the Presbyterian Church.

I am not altogether sure that I know the cause or the remedy but I feel that I know some of it. I am taking the liberty of addressing you, and privately, and I trust that you will accept what I have to say in the spirit in which I offer it. I mean to be wholly respectful.

The unrest is primarily due to the fact that men and women do not know God, do not realize that He is the most real of all powers and influences, that He is most reasonably approachable and responsive and that He is the only source from which can be obtained that peace, joy, satisfaction of mind and contentment which places man at ease.

As the pastor is the presumed leader of the congregation he very generally is not practical enough and not skillful enough to make God really attractive to men and women. Throughout the years of youth and earlier manhood he who becomes pastor spends his years in theory gaining an education and is wholly without practice and contact with the practicalities of life. When the pastor as pastor assumes official charge he is necessarily a theorist and has yet to learn how to deal with men in practical life whom he would have understand him. I once heard a German say that one not a German had first to learn to think in German before he could well speak German. So it takes many years for a young pastor to learn to think in the language of the layman before he can speak well the language of the layman and make an effective appeal. In this all too few pastors ever become effective as they too seldom become practical. I am leading to the point that some means must be adopted to improve or rather overcome the present condition.

I believe that the only way to overcome the present condition and appeal convincingly to the layman is for the Church to enlist the best brains in the church or outside the church or both combined to frame the sermons to be used by the pastors. The pastor at first thought would likely rebel at that but with plenty of humility he could surrender. Generally speaking the pastor has not the ability to frame sermons with the sequence of thought needful to make them convincing and compelling. He has not had the kind of an education needed. For him to know the Greek shades of meaning of words is not sufficient and to be able to tell bible stories dating two thousand years back and not properly link them up with a mode of living to fit

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into the present day life is not sufficient.

The layman would have full respect for the thoughts of the best brains of the day made into sermons and delivered by the pastor, while as it is he does not have such respect for the product of the mind of the pastor whose ability as a thinker and reasoner he well knows, though the pastor be a graduate of Yale Seminary or any other school.

Put the best sermons in the hands of the pastor and give him more time to be a MINISTER, give him time to be a constructive minister throughout the whole week where he can have contact and can exemplify. If industry or commerce had so little coordination as the church it could not succeed. Commerce and industry have their fingers on the pulse every hour of every day of the week.

A man representing a science would at any time more ably present his argument than does the pastor, excepting an occasional one, and yet the Christian religion is certainly as exacting as any science as it is a science and has a value equal and beyond any other science. Nothing is more real than God, and science only reveals facts that were established by God.

Pastors must have better education, more rounded-out, so as to enable them to think better and better to interpret the thoughts of others, to see things as they are, visualize them as they want them to be and to make them as they should be, all governed by logic.

Men to be attracted by and convinced by sermons must be made to think and reason as the pastor unfolds his sermon. Men and women today demand the best brains of the day in books and magazines, the pastor does the same, and thinking men and women are not content to hear a mediocre sermon as it does not compel them to think. Convince the thinking man and woman and he and she are the more useful because he or she is more active and more aggressive. To hear and complacently approve platitudes does not spur a man to seek an affectionate contact and working relationship with God wherefrom he can obtain the vast benefits accessible through such relationship.

The pastor is too isolated and that by reason of his acquired state of mind. By reason of his present schooling he either consciously or unconsciously assumes an attitude of superiority though he may feel spiritually ever so humble.

If industry or commerce had such a wonderful force for success usable for its purposes it would make a spectacular display of it and work it for all there was in it. The church has the advantage over all enterprise and as God set all forces in motion and has not disconnected Himself and is ever-present man surely can by proper means be made to be respectful of the fact, by proper presentation.

I am addressing you privately and I trust that you may regard me as wholly respectful.

Sincerely yours,

Noble L. Moore

No. 1.

Brief of Points and Authorities
for the Commission.

Confidential.

In re matter pending before the
Assembly's Special Committee of
Fifteen.

A Brief of Points and Authorities
as to present conditions.

There is a clear dispute between factions in the church as to the authority of the General Assembly in several aspects, - i. e., - First, as to its power to make authoritatively what is known as deliverances, on its own motion, and without the action of the Presbyteries, stating the essential doctrines of the church as the Assembly then understands them; and Second, as to its power to do likewise in dealing with appeals from the lower judicatories; and third, as to its power to review and reverse the action of Presbyteries in admitting or ordaining ministers; also Fourth, the effect

-2-

of any such decision, and of the opinion expressed by the judicial commission, if approved by the Assembly.

If the law of the church on these subjects is settled, or so strongly indicated that a result can be practically forecast, the commissioners ought to know it, although in discharging their present duty they may not need to use it.

I have attempted therefore, for information only, and from an unpartisan standpoint, to brief the authorities on this point, historically and legally.

I.

The power to make deliverances.

In the following instances, among others, the General Assembly has asserted its authority to declare the doctrines of the church

-3-

a: The "Adopting Act" of 1729 was the act of the Synod, on a motion by a committee (there being then no "General Assembly"). It sets forth the fundamental belief of the church and defines its standards.

(Digest, Vol. 2, pp. 4 - 7).

No action by the Presbyteries is indicated.

It recites that it is done upon the supplication of the people of Paxton and Deery.

b: In 1786 the Synod recited that it considered the power of the Synod in matters purely ecclesiastical "equal to the power of any Synod or General Assembly in the world".

(Digest, Vol. 2, p. 7.)

-4-

c: In 1758 the Synods of New York and Philadelphia, (reunited after the separation in 1745), in the articles of reunion provided that,-

"When any matter is determined by a major vote every member shall either actively concur or passively submit; x x
If his conscience permit him to do neither he shall x x
peaceably withdraw; x x
Provided this shall be understood to extend only to such determination as the body shall judge indispensable in doctrine or Presbyterian government."

Digest, Vol. 2, p. 31.

d: In 1832 the General Assembly, on the recommendation of its own committee, to which had been referred a certain overture, ruled that the catechisms were a part of our standards, and adopted as part of the Confession of Faith.

Digest, Vol. 2, p.11.

-5-

e: In 1843 it was resolved by the General Assembly, in answer to a question, (probably by a Presbytery), that when ministers are received into the church, and answer affirmatively the constitutional questions as to accepting our standards they are to be understood as accepting the catechisms also,

"in the same unqualified sense in which they are understood to embrace and assent to the doctrines, precepts and statements contained in other parts of the Confession".

Digest, Vol. 2, p.11.

f: In 1892 the General Assembly at its own instance made a deliverance in reference to the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the duty of those who cannot accept it.

Digest, Vol. 1, p. 537.

g: In 1910 there was a general deliverance by the General Assembly setting forth doctrines then avowed to be essential. This was done in response to the request of the Permanent Judicial Commission, and without reference to the Presbyteries.

Digest, Vol. 1, pp. 274-6.

h: In 1916 this was repeated in substance, and applied to the action of Presbyteries in receiving ministers, without asking concurrence by the Presbyteries.

Digest, Vol. 1, pp. 276-280.

i: The same was done in 1922.
(Digest, Vol. 1; p. 11)

And in 1894
(Digest, Vol. p.)

j: In some of the above, and the

-7-

following instances, the deliverance was given in answer to a question submitted or an overture from one or more Presbyteries, but in none was it submitted for adoption by the Presbyteries.

Note the following as miscellaneous analogies:

In 1837, on report of a committee or memorial, the General Assembly, by a deliverance, dealt with Presbyterian doctrine generally.

Digest, Vol. 2; p. 343

In 1883 (on overture from six named Presbyteries), it dealt with the right of Presbytery to review or overrule a decision of its own judicial commission.

-8-

In 1892, (on overture from three named Presbyteries), it dealt with the terms of subscription.

In 1893 the New School Assembly dealt in a similar manner with questions of doctrine.

In 1893 similar questions were dealt with in a similar manner.

In 1895 the Presbytery of New York overtured the General Assembly to instruct it as to its duty toward students applying to be taken under its care. Answering this the Assembly "instructed and enjoined" the New York Presbytery not to receive under its care for licensure students pursuing their studies in seminaries

respecting whose teaching the Assembly disavows responsibility.

Digest, Vol. 1, p.363.

Note: The next following Assembly construed and limited the words "instruct and enjoin"; but "urged" Presbyteries to "give due respect" to the deliverance of the Assembly in respect to students.

Note also, that in 1899, without an appeal, and on overtures from certain Presbyteries calling the Assembly's attention to a certain book by Dr. McGiffert, as asking the Assembly to "take such action as shall be conducive to the Church's purity, peace and honor, and to the maintenance of the oracles of God", the General Assembly made a full deliverance on the subject.

Digest, Vol. 2, pp.317-320.

-10-

Note also that in 1798 a committee called the Assembly's attention to a certain "creed", announced by one Dr. Balch, which was averred to be "full of error". In answer the General Assembly called on him to disavow his errors; this he did, and "submitted to admonition by the Assembly.

Digest, Vol. 2, pp.320-322.

Note also that in 1894 the General Assembly, in making certain recommendations, called attention to the Form of Government, Chap. XII, Sec. V, quoted as follows,-

"To the General Assembly belongs the power of deciding all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline."

Digest, Vol. 1, p. 367.

And in 1922 the General Assembly,

-11-

on an overture from a Presbytery, gave an answer in form a resolution expressing its judgment on "The Shorter Bible".

Digest, Vol. 1; p. 11

The declaratory statement adopted in 1903 is an illustration of the distinction uniformly made by the General Assembly between changes in doctrine, which must be approved by two-thirds of the Presbyteries, and interpretations or affirmations, which the Assembly assumed did not require such approval. While that statement was in form an interpretation only, yet in intent and purpose it was a change, designed to overcome Cumberland objections to certain Presbyterian doctrines. It was submitted to the Presbyteries as a change in doctrine, and the Cumberland Assembly certified to its

-12-

people that our standards had been changed so as to remove their objections; (Digest, Vol. 2; p. 72). It was held by the Supreme Court of Tennessee not to be a change, since it did not purport to replace anything in the standards, but most other courts accepted the General Assemblies' certifications as conclusive on both sides.

(See references above.)

It also appears that this practice was recognized by many of the Presbyteries, by putting questions, asking instructions, or presenting overtures. Instances of this also appear below, among instances of complaints for heresy.

In 1896, apparently for the first time, complaint was made that this amounted to changing doctrines of the church without the concurrence of the Presbyteries, as re-

-13-

quired by the constitution. That purpose was disclaimed by the Assembly.

~~Digest, Vol. p.~~

Result:

The General Assembly has always asserted its right to deal, by way of deliverance, resolution or answers to queries, in respect to sundry questions of doctrine, as they arise, as well as by judicial decisions on appeal, without asking the concurrence of the Presbyteries.

II.

The Right to Control Presbytery
as to the Reception of Ministers.

The general right to entertain appeals from the action of Presbyteries, without designation of subjects, and with-

-14-

out limitation, is conferred by Form of Government; Chap. XIV; Sec. IV.

Book of Discipline, Ch. IX; Sec. 74.

In 1896 the General Assembly, on an overture from the Synod of India, asking that the action of the Synod on matters of doctrine might be made final, after a report by its own committee, answered that it had no right to do so, but is compelled by the constitution to deal with such a question if lawfully brought before it.

Digest, Vol. 1, pp. 272-3.

In 1914 answering an inquiry by a Presbytery as to its right to review the action of its own judicial commission, the General Assembly voted that the Presbytery had no such right, but could only appeal to a higher judicatory.
Digest, Vol. 1, p. 692.

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Such is also the effect of appeals from the action of the Presbytery in heresy cases: As in the Briggs case, in 1893, where on appeal the General Assembly made a general review of the church's position on matters of doctrine.

(Digest, Vol. 2; pp.307-310.)

In 1874, on an overture from Westchester Presbytery asking it to determine the powers of the General Assembly over the functions of the Presbytery in granting and continuing licenses to preach the gospel, the Assembly replied that it "has no power over the functions of the Presbytery in granting or continuing licenses save that of review and control."

(Digest, Vol. 1; p.144.)

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In 1896, (particulars and subject-matter not stated), the Assembly voted that "the acts of the Presbytery may be appealed from or complained of to a higher judicatory".

(Digest, Vol. 1; p. 150.)

Note, that in 1816, apparently in reviewing the records of a Synod, (particulars not stated), the Assembly ruled that Presbytery having received a minister, the Synod should not have directed Presbytery to rescind its action, as that question was for the Presbytery itself; also that Presbytery cannot rescind its former action.

(Digest, Vol. 1; p. 171.)

On this subject see acts of Assembly and assertions of authority in instances mentioned above.

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In 1855 the General Assembly recognized the right of Presbyteries to satisfy themselves of the soundness of the faith of applicants for admission, but added:

"It being always understood that each Presbytery is in this concern, as in all others, responsible for its acts to the higher judicatories".

Digest, Vol. 1; p. 174.

See a like ruling in 1912, on an overture.

Digest, Vol. 1; p. 278.

Result:

The General Assembly seems to have uniformly and frequently insisted on its right, on appeal or other lawful procedure, to review, consider and determine the rights of the parties, and to state its

-18-

construction of the standards bearing on the question.

III.

The right of the General Assembly to assert and interpret the doctrines of the church has often been upheld by the civil courts.

This question has arisen in all the union and reunion cases. There it has been held that church property and property rights can only be concluded where the consideration does not involve a departure from the doctrines of the church in question. On this subject the courts have held, (with two exceptions), that the General Assembly has the right to speak; and when it has spoken the courts will not examine these systems of doctrine for themselves.

-19-

In the reunions of old and new school in 1871, and the Cumberland and Presbyterian in 1908, the acts are set out in the Digest, and in both it appears that the Presbyteries did not act, and were not called upon to act, on the question whether the systems of doctrine were similar. In both cases, and on both sides, this was determined by the action of the General Assemblies. The question which the Presbyteries of both churches were required to answer categorically was whether the churches should unite on the basis of the subsisting standards of the Presbyterian church, (naming them). The Presbyteries of course had full information of the details, but the certification of the church doctrines, and their interpretation, and the fact of mutual agreement was

-20-

determined by the Assemblies alone.

Decisions on this subject are as follows:

Watson v. Jones, 13 Wallace, 679 (727).

"In this class of cases we think the rule of action which should govern the civil courts, founded in a broad and sound view of the relations of church and state under our system of laws, and supported by a preponderating weight of judicial authority is, that, whenever the questions of discipline, or of faith, or ecclesiastical rule, custom or law have been decided by the highest of these church judicatories to which the matter has been carried, the legal tribunals must accept such decisions as final, and as binding on them, in their application to the case before them."

Barkley v. Hayes, 208 Fed. 319 (326).

"I think the question of regularity in effecting this union, and of substantial identity in the faith of the two churches, was finally and conclusively determined by the General Assembly of the Cumberland Church."

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(p. 332):

"It may readily be conceded that the Westminster Confession of Faith, in terms, as well as in original construction, did not bear such interpretation; but the power to construe and declare its doctrinal standards was vested in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. Those standards were from time to time materially modified and altered. In 1903 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America issued a declaratory statement, together with new chapters, in which, among other things, it was said:

(Here copy)

It was upon the basis of this declaration that the union was adopted. In my opinion, those utterances completely met all the points of difference between the two churches. x x It is true that some subsequent general assembly might change such declarations and construction; but this is possible in any general assembly with respect to any doctrinal standard, and such power is expressly recognized in the several constitutions."

Ramsey v. Hicks, 174 Ind. 428, 442.

"When the matter in controversy is purely of ecclesiastical cognizance, and the church tribunal proceeds in manifest good faith under color of authority, its decision upon the question of its own jurisdiction, as well as upon subsidiary questions, is binding upon the civil courts."

Bentley v. Ulay, 175 Ind. 494, 496.

"That both bodies are representative in form and character, and not independent or congregational, is the controlling fact in the case. It is not denied, but is in fact conceded, that, upon all questions of doctrine, faith, and discipline, the highest judicatory in each of the former organizations was the final arbiter."

Presbyterian Church v. Cumberland Church,
245 Ill. 74, (98).

"It is urged by counsel for the plaintiffs in error that the differences between the creeds and church doctrines of the Cumberland church and the Presbyterian church are so fundamental that there can be no reunion between the two churches. x x

The decision of the questions thus raised involves a determination of the meaning of the Westminster confession of faith and catechism and the effect thereon of the revision of 1903; also a consideration of the confession of faith of the Cumberland church, which involves a weighing and comparing of the two creeds. The questions thus raised are essentially ecclesiastical and were obviously proper questions for the determination of the general assemblies of the Cumberland church and the Presbyterian church, and the highest judicatories of the two churches having passed upon those questions and held that there were no such fundamental differences, at the time of the proposed reunion, existing between the creeds, church doctrines and ecclesiastical standards of the two churches as to bar a reunion of the two churches, we are of the opinion this court is foreclosed by the decisions of those general assemblies upon the questions thus decided, whether the decisions of the said ecclesiastical courts were right or wrong."

Fussell v. Hall, 134 Ill. App. 620, (630).

"The general assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian church in effect determined that the confession

-24-

of faith of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, as modified by the declaratory statement of 1903, was so far like that of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church that it was the duty of the two churches to reunite; that the two churches were of substantially similar faith. Under the authorities we are bound by the decisions of the general assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, - the highest court in that church, - to the effect that there is such an agreement between the systems of doctrine contained or stated in the confessions of faith of the two churches since the declaratory statement of 1903 as to warrant the union proposed."

(p. 631):

"Section 40 of the constitution of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church makes its general assembly the highest court in the church, and section 43 of such constitution gives such assembly power to concert measures for promoting the prosperity and enlargement of the church, x x as well as power to decide all controversies respecting doctrine. The effect of such sections is to make the general assembly not only a legislative and administrative body, but one with judicial powers upon ecclesiastical questions as well."

Result:

It would avail nothing therefore to combat the present position of the General Assembly as to its rights in both of said matters; and the function of the commission will be to consider what may be done to promote peace nevertheless.

IV.

The effect of any Assembly action, and limitations thereon.

This is so thoroughly settled, as a matter of law, that it needs no elucidation. I therefore make only a brief statement of the rule, with a few instances of its application by the General Assembly.

The general conference (United Brethren) adjudged and declared that what appears

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in the record as the revised confession of faith is in fact the fundamental belief and constitution of the church.

"Who shall question the correctness of its decision, or revise it? The civil courts? To do so would be to assume ecclesiastical jurisdiction, - a jurisdiction they do not possess. It was clearly an ecclesiastical matter x x and the church, through its legally constituted tribunal having adjudged the matter, we think the civil courts are bound by such adjudication."

Lamb v. Cain, (Ind.) 29 N.E. Rep.
13, (22).

Barkley v. Hayes, 208 Fed. 319, (332).

"It is true some subsequent General Assembly might change such such declarations and construction; but this is possible in any general assembly with respect to any doctrinal standard, and such power is expressly recognized in the several constitutions."

p. 329:

"It is thus established by undoubted weight of authority that the

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decision of the supreme judicatory of the Cumberland Church that a valid union was effected, both in form and in substance of doctrinal standards, is conclusive and must be accepted by the civil courts."

In 1860 the General Assembly resolved that a judgment on trial of a minister must be respected, though irregularly entered, until reviewed by a superior judicatory.

(Digest, Vol. 1, p. 548.)

In 1824 the General Assembly ruled that the Assembly had no right to reverse a decision of a former Assembly, except in case of such palpable error as would manifestly interfere with the substantial administration of justice.

(Digest, Vol. 1, p. 546.)

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And to like effect in 1864:

(Digest, Vol. 1, p. 846.)

Result:

Action by the Assembly taken heretofore is therefore conclusive until lawfully changed. This does not of course affect the capacity of the Assembly to supplement its declarations of doctrine by limiting their application, - and agreeing to do so, - in accordance with the equally positive duty, enjoined in the same manner, of patience with differences and tolerance with those who cannot consent.

V.

A History of Tolerance.

This may be deemed a question of policy, but the Presbyterian Church is as

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firmly committed to it as to its doctrinal positions, and seems never to have found them inconsistent.

1: Human minds do not operate uniformly, and any given body of truth has always been apprehended in different aspects. This the American church at least had taken into account from the beginning.

2: This is biblical. The head himself declined to repel sincere people who had not yet been able to apprehend him. He said, "He who is not against us is on our side".

3: The following instances which occurred in establishing the church under the apostles illustrate my point:

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a: Paul and James accepted the same body of truth, but they differed on a question of interpretation,- i.e.,- should ancient rites be applied in the new church? They agreed on a compromise, and both remained in the church; and ultimately both died as martyrs for their common faith.

b: Paul and Peter had a sharp controversy on a question of principle. Paul said,- "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed". But they both remained in the church; and Peter, in one of his general letters, referred to Paul as his "dearly beloved brother", and advised all christians to read his letters,- although he seemed obliged to

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admit that he found difficulty in understanding them himself.

c: Paul and Barnabas differed sharply about the reception, - or at least the ordination, - of a minister, but both remained in the church, and each in his chosen field did brave and effective work.

d: Certain Corinthian christians were dividing into factions purporting to follow respectively Paul and Apollos and Peter, evidently seeing, or thinking they saw, something distinctive in their leadership; but Paul urged them to forget all that, and remember that they were first christians, and owed a common loyalty to the church, the body of whose doctrines they all preferred.

4: The spirit of tolerance and patience with each other's differences is also embedded in the standards themselves.

5: It is written into the act of the first American Assembly, in connection with its adoption of our standards, and on settled principles, as a part of our governing code, is to be read into all the actions of the General Assembly.

The two were not then regarded as inconsistent. Both were to be held together. The faith therefore may, under our standards, be held firmly notwithstanding differences of apprehension or construction.

The language is this:

(Part of a chapter prefixed to the Form of Government by the first American General Assembly, published in 1788.)

"They (the first Assembly) also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ, and in these they think it the duty of both private christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other".

Digest, Vol. 1; p. 74.

Somewhat similar language had been used long before, when as yet there existed no General Assemblies.

See Adopting Act of 1729, by the Synod of New York.

(Digest, Vol. 2, p. 46.

(1st chapter, on an "Act relating to subscription".)

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"In case any minister of this Synod or any candidate for the ministry shall have any scruple with respect to any article or articles of said confession or catechism he shall x x declare his sentiments to the Presbytery or Synod, who shall notwithstanding admit him to the exercise of the ministry and to ministerial communion if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge his scruple or mistake to be only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship or government."

(Digest, Vol. 2, pp.4, 5.)

See also deliverance by the General Assembly in 1896, as to adherence to the standards:

"Along with this insistence upon this unique supremacy of the Holy Scriptures there is in the standards the acknowledgment of human fallibility. Christian churches and their judicatories being composed of fallible men may err. This admission of liability to err, however, x x is simply the declaration by the church of its dependence upon the

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divine author of the Scriptures for the guidance of his spirit in the interpretation of his word, and in the formulation and application of its standards".

Digest, Vol. 2, p. 12.

See also doctrinal deliverance upon the completion of union with Cumberland.

First Session in Joint Assembly.

(1906) We quote from Sec. 2:

"That ministers, ruling elders and deacons, in expressing approval of the Westminster Confession of Faith as revised in 1903, are required to assent only to the system of doctrine contained therein, and not to every particular statement in it."

(Digest, Vol. 2, p. 71.)

Incidental Facts.

From 1729 to 1924 there have been at intervals twelve amendments made to the Confession of Faith.

Since 1788 the Form of Government was fully revised in 1821, and to 1924 there have been fifty-three amendments.

All these, and the provision of the standards for dealing with them, imply that new light on the Scriptures may involve or require changes in statement, or even in substance, as in the declaratory statement.

Result:

It seems plain therefore that the duty to be considerate with differences of

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opinion, within the debatable field of interpretation, is as much a part of our covenant of subscription as the duty to uphold the faith, and this can no more be ignored than that.

The case would of course be different if any individual should find himself unable, or no longer able, to accept the doctrines of our standards, or any of them. In such case the question is not one of interpretation but of denominational loyalty, and the mode of dealing with it is not within our present field of inquiry.



No. 2.

Mr. Moore's Analysis
for the Commission.

Confidential.

N. G. Moore.

Analysis.

(For the Special Committee)

1: The "unrest" mentioned in the resolution of the General Assembly relates to questions of belief, or at least of emphasis, as to the doctrines essential to Presbyterianism as a system.

2: These affect only the ministry, for the membership, as such, are not called upon to hold any doctrines not common to christians of any denomination. (See 2 Digest, pp. 71, 89.)

3: The same in essence is true of the elders and deacons, who only profess a "general approval". (2 Digest, p. 81.)

4: But the church, as a whole, comprises them all.

5: So it is assumed that the doctrinal differences among the ministers

-2-

have created the prevailing "unrest" in the whole church.

6: Therefore this Committee is to investigate, and to recommend some method of correcting or allaying this unrest among the ministers, for the purpose of promoting the peace of the church as a whole.

7: The differences in question relate chiefly to these points:

(a) The interpretation of the Scriptures, including the nature and extent of inspiration; also the meaning and bearing of the accepted standards of Presbyterianism.

(b) The emphasis to be placed on certain passages, so as to furnish an acceptable, or at least controlling, criterion of Presbyterian doctrine.

-3-

(c) The authority and credibility of the miracles narrated in one or more of the gospels.

(d) The nature and character of the resurrection of the Lord, and also of christians dying in the faith.

Assuming then that among our ten thousand ministers there are differences of view as to these questions, (with others less marked), all proclaiming and believing themselves to be evangelical and scriptural, and also soundly Presbyterian, what can the Committee recommend, to promote peace?

In the nature of things this must apply differently to the present and the future. Dealing first with present conditions,-

It is manifest that as to each

-4-

point of difference only one view, if truly ascertained, is correct, and all others are erroneous; and as the Committee cannot impute improper motives, but must presume sincerity and good faith, those who would find themselves in error, if an infallible criterion could be found, would frankly admit it, and change.

It is also manifest that the church itself cannot control the operations of the human mind, or guarantee to all its ministers correct mental operations.

It is also manifest that a mere majority vote, even in the General Assembly, cannot provide such an infallible criterion, chiefly because its voting constituents vary from year to year; and also because if it cannot convince its own minority it cannot hope to satisfy the sincere doubts

-5-

or pre-judgments of those holding opposite opinions. Thus the judgment of the majority contains the same elements of doubt and difference as before.

It is also historical that the existence of these differences among its own constituents has always been known to and recognized by the church. They existed while the new school was a separate body; and also while the Cumberland Church was a separate body; yet their ministers were not only invited to join us, notwithstanding these, but the General Assembly itself, in each instance, voted that the systems of doctrine and differences of view which prevailed in these bodies were in substance like our own: (2 Digest, pp. 38, 51, 52, 71, 72, 78).

-6-

These things are made plain by that action, - at least as to present conditions, - first, that having invited them into our fellowship, with the assurance that their difference of view was not a hindrance, we are not now at liberty to invite them out, or their successors; and second, that we cannot justify a distinction against those of our own original company, who adopt similar views; and third, that it would not be consistent to contend that our ministry must not only sincerely accept our standards, but must, on peril of their status, interpret them alike.

It is also manifest that there is no way of ousting mere members, nor even elders or deacons, from the church, for they are not called upon to assert them-

-7-

selves on matters of doctrine, and cannot be guilty of heresy. Therefore pressure by the majority can only be used upon the ministry.

The foregoing taken to be true, what is it practicable to do? The following seem to be the only alternatives:

(a) Individual ministers may be ejected, on a standard created by the General Assembly, and ultimately it might be expected that only those who remain would be expected to conform to that standard. This may turn out otherwise, for ultimately the membership, which is always free from these obligations, will control the General Assembly, and may create a different standard.

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(b) It seems to be supposed by some that by a kind of proclamation or declaration, (probably by the General Assembly), all those ministers not conforming to such an announced standard should, on a certain event, become and be expelled from the church, ipso facto, and cease to have any rights or privileges as Presbyterians.

But this would be revolutionary, if it were possible; and if effective would leave churches and congregations without pastors, while still nominally Presbyterian. This would create more trouble than it would cure.

(c) We may deal with them as God does,- with patience and forbearance, hoping that the common evangelical

-9-

ground on which they all stand, and which, by inviting members, we ourselves aver to be sufficient to save the world, will prove sufficient to justify their ministry.

(d) As to those who are to be hereafter received into the Presbyterian ministry, it is of course practicable for the subsisting church, although by a majority only, to fix a test or criterion, to which the minority, though of a different opinion, must bow.

The standard of the church may obviously be that criterion, and it can only be applied to the qualifications of new candidates for the ministry. That it should be so applied, if its

-10-

meaning were clear, will probably not be denied; and the General Assembly, directly or indirectly, is the only practical authority to specify such requirements; but the construction of these standards, and the rigidity of their application, would still furnish a basis for disputation, which a General Assembly ultimately must settle. The heat of discussion heretofore has centered at this point; but it seems to me that its chief bitterness has arisen from the unwarranted feeling that the subsisting ministry is already arrayed in hostile factions. I think it is shown above that this is not true. Despite differences of view the present ministers are on an equal footing

-11-

of function and privilege, and not only should but must concede to each other, in brotherly regard, an equivalent status. If this be done the next step should be easier; for on questions of judgment and policy the majority must prevail. We are accustomed to living by that rule in every social relation and can do so with frank submission so long as there is no hostile attitude.

Whether the General Assembly shall in advance dictate terms for the reception of new ministers or not seems unimportant, for by direct appeal its judicial function may be invoked with a similar result, as was illustrated in the last Assembly.

To this the minority,- whatever it be, and whatever view it may hold at the time,- must and can reconcile itself; and it may do so more readily because it has always the right, by discussion or persuasion, to procure, if it can, a change of attitude.

If these views are accepted as correct the frank and kindly effort to promote a friendly approach is the thing most to be desired, and most confidently to be expected.

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Supplement.

The foregoing seems to me to reach a correct conclusion in so far as it relates to the duties, obligations and privileges of those who, deeming themselves sincere supporters of the Presbyterian standards, cannot concur in decisions or deliverances made by a governing majority of the General Assembly; but there still remain to be mentioned certain corresponding duties, obligations and privileges of those supporting the prevailing view. Tolerance of varying views, within the bounds of our system, is not merely a christian grace. Such differences are contemplated by the original American adopting acts, and have been assumed and provided for in

-14-

a number of the most important and significant acts of our church, and may be justly said to constitute a limiting part of our body of church law. The language is this:

"They (the first Assembly) also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ, and in these they think it the duty of both private christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other".

It seems manifest therefore that in respect to action to be taken and things to be done, all our ministry and membership ought to frankly and cheerfully observe and abide by the conclusions and decisions of those for the time being exercising authority; but it is equally

-15-

manifest that this would be without prejudice to individual views as to the correctness or expediency of such rulings. Those in the ministry are not thereby outlawed, nor their official standing in the church in any wise impaired thereby.

It is to be hoped that at some time in the future all our ministers and membership may come to, or at least approach more nearly, uniformity of judgment in detail, as well as in relation to governing principles; but such unity does not seem yet to prevail, even in smaller groups. There were serious differences in the early church, in some cases on principle and in others as to administration, but they exhibited, notwithstanding,

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such brotherly regard and courtesy that observers were constrained to say of them, "Behold how these christians love one another". What was done then may, with the like grace of God, be done now.

No. 3.

Suggestion for Resolution
for the Commission.

Confidential.

Resolution.

The General Assembly, speaking for the great membership it represents, and for its ten thousand ordained ministers, finds the language at its command inadequate to express the feeling of sadness and apprehension which has been for some time past creeping upon the church, dulling its vision, chilling its ardor and even weakening its faith in God. Harshness, bitterness and suspicion between those who should be, and even those who once have been brothers, seem to have been spreading in the atmosphere. They have caused much sadness, and many heavy hearts; especially because, in spite of many prayers, they seemed to spread and grow to so great an extent that fear arose that a remedy could not be found, and that the brotherly spirit which ought to prevail between the children of

-2-

God, and even the coherence of our beloved church, was in peril.

But now the Spirit which leads us into truth seems to be again shedding his illumination upon us; the voice of God seems to be heard more clearly; our confidence appears to grow and our hopes to quicken. This is an answer to prayer. It is a gift of God. We trust that it opens a period of new and greater usefulness. With it seem evidently returning our feeling of mutual confidence and brotherly affection and forbearance. Perhaps we have been dwelling too closely and too long on our responsibility for the ark of the covenant, forgetting the evidences of God's patience carried within it. Perhaps we have forgotten somewhat, in our zeal for

-3-

correct doctrine, that the graces of the spirit,- especially patience and kindness, are made by the Scriptures and our own standards of faith a duty, as well as an adornment; and that in that system both are put on an equivalent footing.

And now, as we are led to dwell upon this phase of the christian view of life, greatly desiring to make it permanent, the General Assembly, on behalf of its constituents here, commits itself and the church it represents, so far as its authority or influence extends, to two great crowning duties and responsibilities, laying equal stress upon both: We will seek to conserve the body of truth for the maintenance of which our church has so long stood. Along with that, in

-4-

harmony with the language and spirit of our standards, we will remember that among our sincere and loyal ministers there are not only diversities of gifts but diversities also ^{of} apprehension, and of construction and interpretation; and we will not deny to any of our brethren, sincerely accepting and supporting our system of doctrine, both our full confidence and also all that liberty of personal judgment which is consistent with a debatable interpretation of our constitution. In that confidence we urge that all alike give their earnest efforts, as a positive duty, not only to promote and defend in a fraternal spirit our body of faith, but also to yield their warm and friendly support to those on whom

-5-

the church shall from time to time lay the burden of administration, recognizing their corporate acts, expressed in any customary form, as constituting, for the time, the law of the church, notwithstanding individual dissent, and accepting them as a sincere effort to advance righteousness and promote peace.

We now therefore, in unity and mutual confidence, pronounce again our oath of allegiance to God our Father, and to our long accepted standards; and we promise God and the church to address ourselves with new fervor and diligence to the task of bringing to the world both salvation and uplift, and the assurance of a blissful immortality.

Edgar W. Work

RECEIVED

NOV 16 1925

Mr. Speer

4614 Fieldston Road,
New York City.

November 13, 1925.

Dr. Robert E. Speer,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York City.

My dear Dr. Speer:-

In accordance with your request I am sending you a copy of the paper which I read to you and Dr. Thompson in Columbus. It is the substance of the longer paper which I read to the Commission in Atlantic City. It contains, however, the additional suggestion which you and Dr. Thompson were good enough to approve, that we emphasize the ^{fact} that there are certain ancestral differences which belong to us as Presbyterians, and which are repeating themselves to-day.

I am also taking the liberty of sending you a copy of the full paper which I read in Atlantic City, in case you may wish to refer to it. Please note, however, that I presented at that time only papers "A" -"Procedure" and "B"- "Survey". I am sending with "A" and "B", however, paper "C" -"Possible Recommendations", which I have not shown to any one. I do not imagine ^{that} these papers will be of any particular use to you, but it seems desirable that we should know the current of one another's thinking.

It will interest you to know that Pres. Wishart of Wooster wrote me last September about the work of our Commission, in answer to a request of mine. He advised that we take the bull by the horns and deal with "our perfectly indecent church journalism". In his judgment it is "perfectly abominable". He adds as follows - "After some investigation of causes, however, it seems to me that before you are through you must logically recommend that the Assembly send down to the Church some clarifying overtures, not on matters of doctrine, but on matters of church procedure, especially the relation of the presbytery to the

higher courts in the matter of ordination. If possible, however, I would hold this off for a year or two years, perhaps, endeavoring to secure a sort of controversial moratorium before the overtures go down. It might be that if this policy were followed the trouble would be over before you got ready to apply any remedies. At least this would be my hope."

As I have indicated to you, I am much interested in what Dr. Wishart describes above as a "controversial moratorium".

With warm esteem, I am, as ever,

Faithfully yours,

Edgar Whitaker Work

COPY

4614 Fieldston Road,
New York City.

September 7, 1925.

Rev. Charles R. Erdman, D.D.,
Lake Placid,
New York.

My dear Dr. Erdman:-

In response to your request through Dr. Mudge I am sending herewith some Suggestions as to Procedure.

In preparing this I found myself going on to write a Survey of the Situation, or an outline of the questions that are likely to come before the Commission. I wrote this (Paper "B") for my own benefit. I hope that there is no impropriety in sending you a copy (enclosed).

My thought about Recommendations is that they should be for moral effect rather than for compulsion. Considering the origin of this Commission and the expectation of the church towards it, it seems to me that the Commission may wield considerable influence in the next Assembly, with a reasonable and appealing Report, that avoids extremes, and bases its conclusions on the Constitution, the History of the Church, and Christian Policy for our times.

For example, on the Virgin Birth, if we decide to make a recommendation about it, I hope that we can conserve the doctrine, but take it out of the field of controversy. I could not write such a Recommendation now, but I think that it can be written.

The situation under the Judicial Decision of the Last Assembly, cannot be viewed otherwise than as serious.

I hope to attend Morris and Orange Presbytery on Tuesday of next week.

With warm regards,

Sincerely yours,

C. J. ...

Paper "A"

Procedure of the

Commission of Fifteen

By E. H. W.
Presented at Atlantic
City, August 1904

The Commission was appointed for two purposes:-

First. To Study

- (a) the present spiritual condition of our Church.
- (b) and the causes making for unrest.

Second. To Report (to next Assembly)

It is implied that the Report will include Recommendations.

- N.B. The Recommendations shall be curative, constructive, protective and progressive, as is indicated -"to the end that the purity, peace, unity and progress of the Church may be assured". It is assumed by the terms of its appointment that the Commission will seek after Peace, and the cessation of controversy. Properly speaking the Commission is a non-partizan body. It is appointed to study.

Operations of the Commission.

First. Prayer. Yes, much prayer! Not casual prayer - but "prayer in the Holy Spirit". If the Commission can be pervaded by a spirit of searching and supplication!

Second. Open discussion in the Commission. Exchange of views and information.

Third. Consideration of documents, reports, publications, etc.

Fourth. Examination of the Constitution of the Church.

Fifth. Examination of the Acts of the Assembly, pertaining to these subjects.

Sixth. Hearing of representatives of Presbyteries and others whom the Commission may summon to testify.

Seventh. Sub-Committees. Some of the work will have to be done by sub-committees.
N. B. It may be wise to have a Committee on Report and Recommendations early at work (of which chairman of the Commission shall be chairman).

N. B. The Report when completed should cover

- (1) A report on the spiritual condition of our Church.
- (2) A report on causes making for unrest.
- (3) A report on recommendations which in the judgment of the Commission tend to peace and progress.

Paper "B"Survey of the Situation.

Below is submitted an analysis of the subjects involved. These topics all bear upon the spiritual condition and unrest of the church.

1. The Church and its Government.
 Rights of Presbyteries. Rights of Assemblies. How far may Presbyteries go in judging of qualifications of students? How far may Assembly go in enacting deliverances affecting terms of ordination, etc? To what extent may General Assembly exercise right of review and control?
N.B. Probably the heart of the difficulty lies here. Should our Constitution be made more specific on these points?
N.B. Where does the decision of last Assembly leave us? (Compare Judicial Decisions of 1924 and 1925).

2. The Church and its Confession.
 More especially - Ministers and the Confession.
 Examine terms of subscription.
 Origin of conservative and liberal is at this point.
 Existence of two schools not new or anomalous.
 No ethical insincerity in exercising just liberty.
N.B. Historically the Presbyterian Church has always admitted reasonable liberty. Not to do so would mean intellectual suicide.
N.B. The specific question here is the Inclusive Church. The Commission should study carefully the question. Is it a menace or otherwise?

3. The Modernist or Liberal Movement.
 As this is supposed to be the main cause of unrest, the Commission should study it.
 What does it mean?
 What does it propose?
 What is its spirit?
 Is it disloyal to the Bible?
 Is it disloyal to Christ?
 Are they who sympathize with it in whole or in part rebels against Presbyterian doctrine and government?
 Is the movement materialistic, agnostic, anti-supernatural, anti-Christian, etc?

4. Partizan Bitterness in the Church.
 This is found on both sides.
 Commission should take notice of acts of personal denunciation and calumny as a source of unrest. (Some of these acts would be libelous in the eyes of a Civil Court).
 Is there evidence of misrepresentation? (The Commission may summon witnesses).
 Is there evidence of diligent fomenting of discord?
 Is there a stream or habit of controversy in our church which some are aiding instead of checking?
N.B. Would it be possible to persuade the Church to deal calmly and fraternally with its differences? At least steps must be taken to stop the trial of men in good and regular standing in newspaper courts.

Paper "B". Sheet #2.

5. The Principle of Toleration.

Is this principle recognized in our Constitution?

Is it applicable at the present time?

Can the Presbyterian Church afford to neglect its use?

N.B. The question here is as to the real genius of the Presbyterian Church. It cannot be made either liberal or fundamentalist. It is neither broad nor narrow. Historically and actually it is a church that allows liberties within the Confession and the Word of God.

6. The Disunion of the Church.

This is serious cause of unrest.

Study carefully past separations in the Presbyterian Church.

Were they useful? Could they have been avoided?

Is there ground for disunion at present?

What would it accomplish?

N.B. It is to be hoped that the Commission will set its face like a flint against all thought of disunion.

7. Modern Science and the Scientific Method.

Another serious cause of disturbance.

What position shall the Presbyterian Church take toward Science?

Can it afford to put itself in apparent opposition to reverent scientific study?

Would it be true to genius of Presbyterianism to take a stand against evolution?

Might it not be a serious dilemma for the church in this scientific age to commit itself to an attitude of unfriendliness toward scientific progress?

N.B. In what position has the recent evolution trial left us?

N.B. Is it wise for the church to compel opposition to evolution

by administrative action? "Compulsion often is the way to lose".

N.B. Can the church ignore the aspirations and attitudes of men who are investigating the natural world?

8. Specific Issues.

(1) Inerrant Bible.

Many hold that disagreement on this subject is the actual source of present controversy.

This is actually not taught either in Bible or Confession.

N.B. Is it ethically correct to state that it is so taught?

(2) Virgin Birth.

This is a doctrine both of Bible and Confession.

For generations the church has held it as a "holy mystery".

It is a thousand pities that it has become an "issue".

If it were possible to vacate the controversy at this point and call the church back to its age-long attitude of reticent reverence and silent acquiescence in the doctrine of the virgin birth, much trouble would be over.

N.B. As this matter now stands (due to deliverances of Assembly and to last judicial decision, 1925,) the Presbyterian Church is already in a serious dilemma on this subject.

Thus - It has permitted this holy mystery to become a theological issue, and has forthwith declared that there is but one possible attitude toward the issue. (This is an act of intellectual compulsion that may have serious consequences).

Paper "B". Sheet #3.

The church has said in other words that the fate of Christianity rests upon a subject which receives relatively little attention in the New Testament, and "with respect to which men of good character and principles may differ".

(God help us to clear the air on this subject!)

(3). Resurrection.

The actual question here is frequently overlooked.

The fact of the resurrection of Christ is not questioned.

It is the mode that is under discussion.

Why should this be a serious cause of division among us?

(4) Licensing and Ordaining Candidates for the Ministry.

(By parity of reasoning, also elders and deacons).

The case of New York Presbytery comes up here.

But other Presbyteries are in the same case.

Because of this problem the General Assembly was induced to adopt its plan of declaring "essential doctrines".

N.B. Can this method be trusted as wise in the long run?

Also - is it strictly constitutional?

N.B. There is a serious question as to whether our present ordaining formulae are the best available. Does our method of handling students justify itself? (Attention called to the serious decline in candidates, etc.)

N.B. What the United Free Church of Scotland is doing along this line.

9. The Lord's Test. - "By their fruits".

The fact that this has been so often forgotten in the present controversy has given rise to much distrust. Is it not true that Christian fruits are found on both sides?

Fundamentalist Christianity produces faithful Christians: so also does liberal Christianity.

N.B. May not the line or ground of mediation in our present troubles be found at the point of experience? The fighting of old battles that can never be won will go on and on (if we will permit it).

Meantime - the real question is whether there is a valid Christian experience being achieved in the churches? Is Christ at work in his church through the Spirit?

10. Christian Policy.

There must be a true Christian Policy for such a time as this.

What is this policy in the light of all the facts?

What is the course of true Christian statesmanship?

The following considerations are of great weight in formulating a truly Christian Policy for the Church.

- (a) No sacrifice of truth or of the real integrity of Presbyterianism.
- (b) Nevertheless a way of approach, of understanding and of just compromise must be sought.
- (c) Acknowledge diversities, but emphasize unities.
- (d) Era of distrust should give place to charity and mutual confidence in the Lord, realizing that the Spirit of God has many operations.
- (e) Calm consideration of the needs of our day, and of the necessity the church should feel to meet them (Especially the highly-trained youth of to-day).
- (f) Realize the un wisdom and danger of extremes.

Paper "B". Sheet #4.

- (g) Solemn inquiry into the question: What are the mind and spirit of Christ for such times?
- (h) Solemn consideration of the operations of grace in the New Testament Church. (Acts 4:33. "great grace was upon them all").

N.B. May it not be that an era of love and brotherly kindness would be the end of controversy?

N.B. If the Presbyterian Church had grace enough at the present time to vacate this controversy, to resolve highly to bring it to an end, what a miracle of God it would be!
Is it not true that the leading mistakes of the church have been made in its handling of controversy?
Let us therefore seek earnestly for a true Christian Policy for this time.

Paper "C"

Possible Recommendations.

These are to be so framed as to produce moral effect rather than compulsion.

(1) A Recommendation dealing with the Virgin Birth. I do not know how to write it, but it can be written, conserving the Presbyterian position about it as a doctrine, yet at the same time setting it in the light of a "holy mystery". The moral effect would be gradually to weaken the hold of controversy on this subject. The church dare not let it go, but it must keep it out of the atmosphere of controversy. (This is what I have described as Vacating the Issue).

N.B. The problem of students must somehow be adjusted to this view.

N.B. In a sense (I say it reverently) the Virgin Birth is a subject not for debate, but for awe and silence. This in fact has been the attitude of the church for centuries - until now.

N.B. Personally, I feel that the present position (under the Judicial Decision of 1925) is exceedingly unfortunate, if not dangerous. Under pressure of circumstances the church has gone too far, and has definitely made the Virgin Birth an issue. The consequences of this action cannot be foreseen.

(2) A Recommendation dealing with subscription to the Confession. Personally I feel that the Commission should frankly state that Presbyterian subscription is not a cast iron process. Personally also I believe that we shall never have real relief until we adopt different formulae for office-bearers (ministers, elders, deacons).

N.B. Nos. 1 and 2 might involve changes in the Constitution. Our Commission may therefore recommend appointment of another Committee of Fifteen to propose suitable changes, according to Form of Government XXIV, III.

(3) A Recommendation on Science. This Recommendation acknowledges in suitable form that while the Bible is the light of the Christian life, God has without doubt revealed himself in manifold ways through nature. The church

Paper "C". Sheet #2.

welcomes the light and help which reverent men are able to bring from their study of natural phenomena, and is confident that true science will never be opposed to true religion.

(4) A Recommendation on the Cessation of Controversy, and of Personal Suspicion, Distrust and Attack.

N.B. The moral effect of a suitably worded recommendation on this subject ought to be very great.

(5) A Recommendation on Peace and Work.

Reverent study of Scripture,
Sincere devotion to the Gospel,
High loyalty to Jesus Christ,
Insistent preaching of a spiritual Gospel,
Urgent prayer in the Holy Spirit,
Diligent engagement in Christian work.

(6) A Recommendation on Unity.

Calling upon the Church to study the ways of a united life and work.
Advising the dropping of party names, and the discouragement of party spirit.
Summoning the Church to realize the true breadth as well as depth of Christian fellowship.

N. Y. Moore

LAW OFFICES
CUTTING, MOORE & SIDLEY
11 SOUTH LA SALLE STREET
TELEPHONE STATE 5400
CHICAGO

November 17, 1925.

Williams & Thompson, 1866-1888
Williams, Holt & Wheeler, 1888-1899
Holt, Wheeler & Sidley, 1899-1913
Holt, Cutting & Sidley, 1913-1919

RECEIVED
NOV 19 1925

Charles S. Hastings
Nathaniel C. Howe
William F. Sidley
Donald F. McPherson
William D. Bangs
Dwight M. Kod
Edwin C. Austin

Mr. Speer

Dr. Robert E. Speer,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

My dear Dr. Speer:-

And here comes another one! I am interested that all the commissioners should be informed of what seems to me to be answers to difficulties in the plan I have heretofore suggested, and therefore I am sending you a copy of a letter I have just written to Dr. Work. The questions I think are indicated in the answers.

Yours very truly,

N. Y. Moore

Encl.

November 17, 1925.

Rev. Edgar Whitaker Work, D. D.,
4614 Fieldston Road,
New York, N. Y.

My dear Dr. Work:-

I received your valued letter, and have read it again and again with much interest. You have mentioned some important queries as to the effectiveness of the course I have suggested. To these I have an answer which satisfies me, though it may not be convincing to others. I can distinguish the subjects better if I put this in the form of question and answer; thus:-

1: Is unanimous consent necessary to the suggested action, and can it be obtained?

I say no to both. We cannot compel, and many will not be persuaded. We must, I suppose, convince an overpowering majority, but this would be equally true of any plan. I assume that most people can appreciate fairness when they see it, and that the church at large is eager for peace. Only a few, I believe, are very hot or angry. Many are indifferent, and many among the membership quite impatient, deeming the dispute unimportant. Some, - perhaps many, - are fearful of waiving some doctrine of the church they

Rev. Edgar W. Work, D.D. -2-

regard as important. If these are convinced that no change is proposed, either in doctrine or government, but that the chief aim is to restore the spirit of brotherhood which is a part of our creed, but is in danger of being lost, and to establish firmly, as a christian duty, true regard for the individual conscience, and write that policy large on our banners, I feel that the majority for it would be very great. If it should be thought best to ask the Presbyteries to approve and confirm it, not as a change of doctrine, but by way of consent to a declared policy, I should be surprised if it was not generally approved. In either case I think hostile contenders would find it hard to get a substantial following. Assembly deliverances and judicial opinions would be sure to tune up to the new pitch, and we could be amicable even in our differences. This is not a dream, for analogies have occurred at every reunion after our numerous separations. At the reunion of the New and Old Schools the enthusiasm was very great, and it rested on similar grounds.

2: Would not the liberals, as a whole, refuse assent to a policy which would limit the privilege of admitting ministers to conform to doctrines declared by the General Assembly?

Rev. Edgar W. Work, D.D. -3-

I think it should not, and would not. If individual liberty is preserved the point mentioned will be the chief if not the only remaining dispute. It is not local in character, but affects the whole church, and no single Presbytery should expect to control that policy as against the other three hundred. A minister, once received, acquires a status throughout the church. The question of fitness is so plainly for the general judgment of the church that it would be difficult to even frame a plausible argument to the contrary.

3: Would not the present controversy over the doctrine of the virgin birth prevent a peaceful settlement?

I think not. As a test of theological status that doctrine does not stand alone. It is one of a group of doctrines as to which different views are entertained, and the history of the church records similar differences about others. Some years ago the burning question was higher criticism. This merged into a question of inspiration; then into the basis for interpretation of the Scriptures. The fact of the virgin birth, as I understand it, is not denied, ^{at least with any positiveness,} but the question relates to the evidence of it, and whether a conviction on that point, if found, should be a test of orthodoxy.

Rev. Edgar W. Work, D.D. -4-

This I suppose to be a phase of the question of interpretation.. There is, I think, no reason to suppose that our church will ever divide on that alone. No doubt we shall have differences, but if our doctrine of due regard for the conscience of other brethren is applied and stressed any such difference ought to be merely a matter for debate, in which the best argument should ultimately win, but it need not be an occasion for strife.

I suppose the chief dispute on this point might be whether the difference is really "interpretation", and if the church should divide it would be on the mere question whether it is or not. I cannot believe there could be an important schism on a point of mere logic; and I think the actions of the church in its several reunions, in 1755, 1871, and 1904, go far to settle this question also. In each of these cases, after a separation on questions then deemed as important as these, the church reunited, and by specific action declared that those holding wither view could live as brethren on the original doctrinal basis, and both be truly Presbyterian. To this we are already committed; and a decision otherwise now would not only have to reverse these prior actions, but would evidently not keep faith with those who then accepted on assurance.

4: May not the majority "excise" a Presbytery, and is not this also a question to be settled before peace can be attained?

I feel quite confident that no General Assembly will attempt anything so drastic; but even if practicable I can find no authority for it other than the general control over the Presbyteries, - i. e., - to change them, separate or divide them, and perhaps wipe them out of existence. Recalcitrancy is of course an offense against the law of the church, and cannot be without remedy; but if a Presbytery should be wound up (excised) in toto, yet the ministers' standing or qualifications, or the relation of their churches to the denomination, would not be disturbed. They can be redistributed among the other Presbyteries; but their errors, if such there be, are only transplanted, and not extinguished. Accordingly I do not fear any such action. Certainly the prevailing desire for peace, if resolved upon by the General Assembly, as now desired, would remove that question.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) N. G. Moore

P. S. As these questions are general, and belong to a discussion of the plan I have suggested, I am sending a copy of this letter to the other commissioners also.

N. G. M.

Lewis S. Mudge

11179

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MOODERATOR
CHARLES R. ERDMAN, D.D., LL.D.
PRINCETON, N. J.

514 WITHERSPOON BUILDING
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

STATED CLERK
LEWIS S. MUDGE, D.D., LL.D.
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

VICE-MOODERATOR
JOHN M. T. FINNEY, M.D.
BALTIMORE, MD.

TREASURER
LAND TITLE AND TRUST CO.
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

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NOV 13 1925

Mr. Speer

November
17th
1925

Dr. Robert E. Speer,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

My dear Bobby,

At the request of Dr. Cheesman A. Herrick
I am herewith returning the manuscript copy of
the "Declaratory Act of the General Assembly
of the United Free Church of Scotland."

With kindest personal regards

Ever affectionately yours,

L. S. M.

Lewis S. Mudge,
Secretary
Special Commission.

*Constitutional act of the GA
to be returned
to the Sec. of the GA*

RECEIVED

NOV 1 - 1928

Mr. Speer

Declaratory Act of the General Assembly, 1928.

- Anent the Confession of Faith

Whereas it is expedient to remove difficulties and scruples which have been felt by some in reference to the declaration of belief required from persons who receive licence or are admitted to office in this Church, the General Assembly, with consent of Presbyteries, declare as follows:-

That, in holding and teaching, according to the Confession, the Divine purpose of grace towards those who are saved, and the execution of that purpose in time, this Church most earnestly proclaims, as standing in the forefront of the revelation of Grace, the love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to sinners of mankind, manifested especially in the Father's gift of the Son to be the Saviour of the world, in the coming of the Son to offer Himself a propitiation for sin, and in the striving of the Holy Spirit with men to bring them to repentance.

That this Church also holds that all who hear the Gospel are warranted and required to believe to the saving of their souls; and that in the case of such as do not believe, but perish in their sins, the issue is due to their own rejection of the Gospel call. That this Church does not teach, and does not regard the Confession as teaching, the fore-ordination of men to death irrespective of their own sin.

That it is the duty of those who believe, and one end of their calling by God, to make known the Gospel to all men everywhere for the obedience of faith. And that while the Gospel is the ordinary means of salvation for those to whom it is made known, yet it does not follow, nor is the Confession to be held as teaching, that any who die in infancy are lost, or that God may not extend His mercy, for Christ's sake, and by His Holy Spirit, to those who are beyond the reach of these means, as it may seem good to Him, according to the riches of His grace.

That, in holding and teaching, according to the Confession of Faith, the corruption of man's whole nature as fallen, this Church also maintains that there remain tokens of his greatness as created in the image of God; that he possesses a knowledge of God and of duty; that he is responsible for compliance with the moral law and with the Gospel; and that, although unable without

the aid of the Holy Spirit to return to God, he is yet capable of affections and actions which in themselves are virtuous and praiseworthy.

That this Church disclaims intolerant or persecuting principles, and does not consider her office-bearers, in subscribing the Confession, committed to any principles inconsistent with liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment.

That while diversity of opinion is recognised in this Church on such points in the Confession as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith therein set forth, the Church retains full authority to determine, in any case which may arise, what points fall within this description, and thus to guard against any abuse of this liberty to the detriment of sound doctrine, or to the injury of her unity and peace.

- - - - -

Henry Chapman Swearingen

111E2

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

THE SPECIAL COMMISSION OF 1925

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
780 SUMMIT AVENUE
ST. PAUL, MINN.

CHAIRMAN
REV. HENRY C. SWEARINGEN, D.D., LL.D.

VICE-CHAIRMAN
JOHN M. T. FINNEY, M.D.

SECRETARY
REV. LEWIS S. MUDGE, D.D., LL.D.

RECEIVED

NOV 20 1925

Mr. Speer

November 17, 1925

Robert E. Speer, D.D.
156 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y.

Dear Dr. Speer:-

Yours of the 11th received. Pleased to learn of the progress your Committee on Causes of Unrest is making.

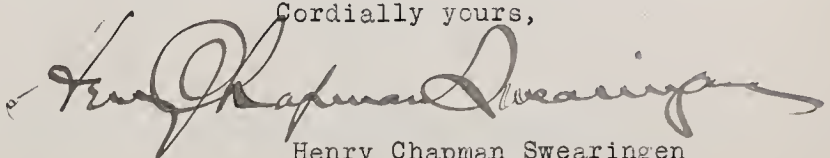
After you left the meeting at Atlantic City, it was agreed that I should invite four individuals to appear before the Commission, two representing each side of the controversy, these persons to be Drs. Macartney and Machen and Drs. Coffin and Merrill. If Dr. Merrill should be unable to attend, I shall invite Dr. William Adams Brown in his place.

Am enclosing copy of a letter to Dr. Keigwin, Chairman of the Committee of Eleven appointed by New York Presbytery. I never have favored inviting official representatives of Presbyteries to appear before the Commission, though ready to welcome them when they request a hearing. The complaint against New York Presbytery's action in appointing the Committee seems to me to make the course of our Committee on conference clear, pending a further meeting of the Commission.

Chicago Presbytery, also, has appointed a Committee. Have not been fully advised of its powers and duties.

With warm personal regard,

Cordially yours,



HCS:CC

Henry Chapman Swearingen

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

THE SPECIAL COMMISSION OF 1925

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
780 SUMMIT AVENUE
ST. PAUL, MINN.

CHAIRMAN
REV. HENRY C. SWEARINGEN, D.D., LL.D.

VICE-CHAIRMAN
JOHN M. T. FINNEY, M.D.

SECRETARY
REV. LEWIS S. MUDGE, D.D., LL.D.

COPY

November 11, 1925

The Rev. A. E. Keigwin, D.D.
West End Presbyterian Church
New York, N.Y.

My dear Dr. Keigwin:-

It has come to my attention that two complaints against the appointment of the Committee of Eleven by New York Presbytery have been lodged with the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. This creates some complications in regard to a conference between your Committee and the General Assembly's Special Commission. The Commission, I feel, will not wish to become entangled in a matter likely to be the subject of litigation in the General Assembly.

As Chairman of the Committee on Conference, I do not feel warranted without further authority from the Commission in fixing a date for a conference between the Commission and your Committee. This decision is merely tentative, you will understand, and is subject to whatever action the full Commission may deem wise, after all the facts have been considered.

Meanwhile, I am very happy to be able to say that if any member or group of members of New York Presbytery desire to be heard and will so request, the Commission will be delighted to confer with them and to receive the benefit of a full expression of their views. This accords with the invitation which was extended to all persons in every Presbytery.

In this connection may I say that only four persons will be asked to appear before the Commission, two who are deemed to be somewhat active representatives of either side of the controversy which has been going on in our church. The Commission wishes to know at first hand just what the various contentions are and just how in their respective views the difficulties may be composed. These brethren are being invited in their individual capacities only and without regard to any official positions which they may occupy.

With assurances of high personal esteem, I remain
Very cordially Yours,

I

Main Causes of Unrest.

By E. M. H.
Presented to Sub. Com.
in Columbus.

I. Church feels the Unrest of the Modern World.

Religious thinking, like all other kinds of thinking, is in a ferment.

Science and Theology are once more in sharp conflict with one another. The present danger is an old danger repeated - the danger of naturalizing or rationalizing religion to such an extent as to lose the force of revelation.

The Materialistic Philosophy of our time leaves its stamp upon religious thought.

The Modern World is feeling its way in the dark. The Church herself stumbles.

There is a vast opportunity as well as a danger.

II. Historic Differences among Presbyterians are again at the front.

There have always been two types or schools of Presbyterianism.

The Westminster Confession shows traces of two schools of thought.

Old and New Schools are self-perpetuating forms of Presbyterianism.

The present liberal party in the Presbyterian Church represents this old division.

To a limited degree (only) it partakes of the modern naturalistic-rationalistic tendency. For the most part it represents the desire for greater freedom and flexibility in religious thinking (in response to the spirit and demand of the times).

III. Pressure of Specific Issues.

Certain matters have become sharp issues - o.g.

(1) Ordination of Students.

(2) Growing out of this - the question of the relative rights of General Assembly and Presbytery.

(3) The whole question of subscription to the Standards. Is there one mood of the mind for subscription - or may there be more than one frame of mind?

(4) As a result - the whole question of Inspiration and Authority of the Scriptures is at the front again.

(5) A specific result of critical studies of modern times is the discussion of the Virgin Birth. The fate of Christianity seems at the moment to hang upon this issue.

Two Attitudes toward these issues are found in the Church.

Both attitudes appear to be evangelical and spiritual.

Not likely that fundamentalist Christians and liberal Christians differ much at bottom.

One - literal, strictly-confessional, authoritative, compulsory, exclusive. Manifests in some sections intolerance and bitterness, indulges in accusations, suspicions. Seeks to narrow the lines of ministry, and to lay bonds upon the mind.

The Other - liberal and tolerant, inclusive, emphasizes fruits of Spirit, magnifies life vs. doctrines, seeks freedom of subscription, stands for rights of individuals, etc., etc.

II

The Cure of Unrest.

Three possible attitudes that the Church may take -

First. Indifference and Inaction. Let controversy go on until it wears itself out.

Second. Compulsion. Invoking of Authority. Even exclusion and excision. There are some who see no other cure than disunion.

Third. The Formation of a Christian Policy for such a time as this.

N.B. Is the Presbyterian church big enough and true enough to prevent the rending of the body of Christ?

Motto - The anatomy of a condition is the first step in its cure.
Time is required: Cure cannot be wrought in a day or a year.
Commission should formulate a Full Policy or Program but make only partial report next May.

Full Policy or Program would be as follows -

- (1) Recognition of two balanced duties.
 - (a) To conserve the integrity of Christian doctrine.
 - (b) To make such adjustments as may be needed in the interest of truth, efficiency and peace.
- (2) Cessation of Controversy. (A sort of Resolution to Cease Firing!)
 (not by legislation but by wise counsel)
 Whatever authority the General Assembly may or may not have, it has authority to take action against Bitterness of Spirit. Is the Church big enough and true enough to stop debating, and work?
- (3) Determination (in principle) of the application of the spirit of tolerance to present conditions.
 Is the principle of tolerance integral to Presbyterian system?
 If we can establish this we can have peace.
- (4) Determination (in principle) of the attitude of the Church toward modern thinking and life - especially its attitude toward modern science.
- (5) Careful study of the whole question of handling candidates for the ministry.
- (6) Inquiry into terms and formulae of subscription with the view of securing greater freedom (also for elders and deacons).
- (7) Careful re-statement in fuller form of relation of governments in the church - especially General Assembly and Presbyteries.
- (8) Some wise determination that shall support the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, but shall tend at the same time to take it out of the field of controversy.
- (9) As to doctrine of Scripture - there is nothing better than Chapter I. Confession of Faith.
- (10) Leading mistakes of the Church have been in connection with the handling of controversy. The need now is to formulate a Christian Policy, based on the Spirit and mind of Christ.

N.B. Some of these questions may require several years of study and advice by this or other Commissions.
 There might well be a Special Commission on Science, including some of our own reverent scientists.
 Suppose, as best antidote to controversy, the Church should embark upon a new era of Bible-reading, Christian scholarship, soul-winning and mission endeavor.

sent into free case.

Rembert

November 19, 1925

Mr. Noble L. Moore,
Mitchell, Indiana.

Dear Mr. Moore:

Your interesting letter of November 16th,
is received. I have read it with interest myself and
I will see that it is presented to the Special Commission
and referred to a suitable committee.

With kind regards, believe me

Yours sincerely,

Lewis S. Hudge
Secretary

W. G. Thompson

10-17-187

1: 187



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NOV 27 1925

Mr. Speer

The Brown Palace Hotel

ABSOLUTELY FIREPROOF

Denver, Colo.

November 24, 1925.

RECEIVED

NOV 27 1925

Mr. Speer

Dr. Robert E. Speer,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York City, N. Y.

My dear Dr. Speer:

I am sending you two copies of the statement I have prepared, with the request that you forward one copy to Dr. Work, since I do not have his New York address.

I am not sure that I have done the thing that was desired. I am entirely willing to have the whole matter eliminated or, if possible, amended in such manner as will bring it within the range of the other sections. The fact that I have been away from my library and without access to books and documents has made it impossible for me to speak with certainty as to dates and other materials.

I regret the delay incident to my travel and other public engagements.

I shall leave here at 11:30 P. M. Sunday night, November 29th, and arrive in Atlantic City Wednesday morning, December 2nd.

With appreciation.

Yours very cordially,

W. G. Thompson

November 27, 1925

The Rev. Lewis C. Mudge, D.D.,
Witherspoon Building,
Philadelphia, Pa.

My dear Dr. Mudge:

I have just sent you the following telegram:

"DOCTORS WORK AND THOMPSON'S SECTION OF REPORT BEING MAILED
TODAY HOPE CAN BE MIMEOGRAPHED."

In connection with Dr. Thompson's report, please note that Mr. Speer has not seen this but I did not think it wise to hold it back if there were a possibility of your being able to mimeograph it along with Sections 1 and 2 of the report. Mr. Speer does not get back to the offices until Monday and Dr. Thompson's report came in this morning's mail. Dr. Work is mailing his directly to you and I enclose Dr. Thompson's herewith.

Sincerely yours,

JGC-KC

Secretary to Mr. Speer.

Lewis S. Mudge

1129

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

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NOV 23 1925

Mr. Speer

THE SPECIAL COMMISSION OF 1925

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
514 WITHERSPOON BUILDING
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

CHAIRMAN

REV. HENRY C. SWEARINGEN, D.D., LL.D.

VICE-CHAIRMAN

JOHN M. T. FINNEY, M.D.

SECRETARY

REV. LEWIS S. MUDGE, D.D., LL.D.

November 27, 1925

Dr. Robert E. Speer, Chairman,
Committee on Causes of Unrest,
Special Commission of 1925,
New York, N.Y.

My dear Dr. Speer:

Enclosed please find a communication
addressed to your Committee in connection with
the Special Commission of 1925. Also a copy of
my reply to the sender.

With kind regards, believe me

Yours sincerely,

L. S. M.

Lewis S. Mudge
Secretary

East Jordan, Michigan, Nov. 24, 1925.

To the sub-committee on causes of unrest, of the committee of 15 appointed by the General Assembly:

In addition to the theological question which has disturbed the Church, there are differences, very sharp in places, of ethical standards, and of the province of certain Churches and ministers to interfere in the affairs of other ministers and churches, to the detriment of the interests of the kingdom.

While I have heard of different examples of this I shall write of one, because in this case being personally interested, it is possibly to produce a certain measure of documentary evidence.

When I came to the East Jordan pastorate four years ago, I found here a man, supported by Home Missions money, under supervision of Synod's committee, for work among the woodsmen. He was not a Presbyterian, and he would not seek to become one. He was sponsoring a Sunday School in this town, which was being used as a nucleus to organize another denomination--the Holiness-- in a town already well churched. When I called this to the attention of the man he immediately put me in the Annanias Class, and I understand he has kept me there ever since. Sometime afterward the Holiness Church was duly organized.

Several complaints ~~were~~ were made to me as to the unethical conduct of the man. Some of these were of a serious nature. These would have been placed before Presbytery for judicial investigation had not his non-Presbyterianism rendered him immune.

I took and maintained the position that the man should be required to become a Presbyterian or be severed from the Presbyterian employ. In that case things could be decided in a regular manner. I asked Dr. John Comin, Synodical Supt. to visit our session and ask it to assume financial responsibility for the work, which I understood meant \$1500. At the same time I stated it was my opinion the work would not cease to be a reproach until the man employed, whoever he might be, was willing to assume Presbyterian obligation, and be amenable to Presbyterian discipline. Shortly after this the Trumbull Ave. Church of Detroit assumed the support of this man who escaped having to answer to answer charges because he had no Presbyterian standing.

Of course the Trumbull Ave. Church would need some report of the man's work. One of the Field force made what was termed an investigation. He failed to let Christian people who ^{know} the woodsmen life at first hand, to know of his visit. When a National Missions Field man makes a report and does not avail himself of the information that Christian men who know far more about the work than he does can furnish him, the report is worse than worthless; it is harmful: it gives the impression that reports of our benevolent agencies are not to be taken at face value.

One report of the work of this man that was published said he clothed in whole or in part over 800 children. I looked for the children and could not find them; I asked to have them pointed out to me, but without avail. After a reasonable in-

investigation, in which I was convinced of the unreliability of the Home Miss on report of work in this vicinity, I had no choice but to believe that Fred Eastman was right in his contention that at times at least, the basis of appeal for money is far different from the actual work that is being done.

Sometime after the visit of the first field man Dr. Comin, head of the force visited here. He had time to call on different members in Presbytery and talk about me, but when he came to this town, where I had asked him to come and meet at our session and ask for \$1500, he had no time to talk with me. It was sometime after before I knew he had been here. He told me he had not had time to call me up. It is not every Board representative that will not have time to let a pastor know he is in town when that pastor has requested him to ask the session for \$1500. It aroused the question why? When Dr. Comin referred to the benevolent money of the Trumbull Ave. Church as a "sacred trust" and frankly told me that employment and conduct of this trouble maker who was immune to presbyterian discipline was none of my business; and when a minister whose salary to the extent of \$1000 came from the Home Board said we could not afford to offend the Trumbull Ave Church, I came to the conclusion that the influence of that church in this section of the state was not only unhealthy, but also very powerful.

I determined to seek relief even if the case had to go on floor on Synod and then to General Assembly. It was not until I had announced my determination to do this that relief did come. Then, and after the man had a sale of property in his wife's name (I am keeping a copy of the advertisement of the sale which meant his creditors were placed at a legal disadvantage) the Trumbull Ave. Pastor wrote me a letter. It was a remarkable letter in what I took to be his assumption that a pastor of a large church has the right to harrass the pastor of a distant and smaller church, if that pastor refuses to lower his ideals of practical ethics to a standard he himself is willing to indorse. There was also the official action of the session of that Church endorsing in an unqualified manner this man who refused to seek presbyterian standing. The session expressed "regret" that he been annoyed in his work. Dr. Comin told me this man was a Baptist. Sometime ago I wrote to State Baptist Headquarters inquiring the Baptist standing of the man. Over against the action of the Trumbull Ave. session is this sentence of the reply: "You can probably mark him down as a fake."

This man is not new in Presbyterian employ, and I am sure that men on the committee in Michigan would not think of engaging him again, as a non-Presbyterian. But I understand the action of ~~that~~ the Trumbull Ave session still stands, in which they express their willingness to continue his support.

While there is a condition in the denomination that emboldens a strong city church to criticize the pastor of a smaller church because that pastor has annoyed a man who was sponsoring a S.S. that was being used as a nucleus to start a Holiness church in a community already well churched; and because the pastor of the smaller church further annoyed the man by insisting that if he remained under presbyterian employ, he seek presbyterian standing so charges for unethical conduct can be preferred against him---while this condition exists, while the local color of the unrest may vary, there is bound to be a spirit of distrust and unrest.

It will not do to say there are constitutional methods to remedy such things. There may be a difference of opinion as to that. The fact is that there are men in small places who think they would be jeopardizing the bread and butter that their families need, should they take constitutional methods that might offend men like the Pastor of the Trumbull Ave Church, and sessions like that of the Trumbull Ave., which did not refrain from putting itself on record, interfering with the efforts of the pastor of a smaller church, in the conscientious discharge of his duty, and the defence of his reputation.

It is not always easy now for the churches in smaller places to secure the pastoral service they need. Actions like that of the Trumbull Ave. church will make it increasingly difficult. . Men are going to hesitate to accept pastorates in places where they know that one of their next problems will be the interferences from pastors and sessions of large Churches, who are willing to indorseⁿ for the smaller communities a revolutionary standard of conduct.

In a comprehensive denomination, like the Presbyterian, there is room, I know, for ministers and churches who believe it is proper to employ men who are not Presbyterian, and who escape immunity from judicial ~~processes~~ processes thereby. But if possible I hope that something can be done to keep these ministers and churches, from interfering with and officially criticizing ministers and ~~many~~ churches who do not share these views, which I consider revolutionary in their tendencies.

Sincerely,

C. S. de la Harpe

COPY

November 27, 1925

Rev. C. W. Sidebotham,
East Jordan, Michigan.

Dear Brother Sidebotham:

I have your communication of November 23d, addressed to the Sub-Committee on Causes of Unrest of the Special Commission of 1925. I will see that this communication is forwarded to the Chairman of said Committee.

With kind regards, believe me

Yours sincerely,

Lewis S. Ludlow
Secretary

Removal

*Refranchising
Spec. Com.*

November 30, 1925

Rev. Thomas Guthrie Speers,
47 University Place,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Speers:

I beg leave to acknowledge receipt of your letter of November 27th, transmitting to me in duplicate a document addressed to the Special Commission of 1925. This document with its signatures will be brought to the attention of the Special Commission at its meeting to-morrow.

With kind regards, believe me

Yours sincerely,

Lewis S. Hudde
Secretary

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

CHURCH OFFICE
47 UNIVERSITY PLACE

November 27th, 1925.

Rev. Lewis Seymour Mudge, D. D.,
Witherspoon Building,
Philadelphia, Pa.

My dear Dr. Mudge:-

Enclosed you will find copies of a statement which we wish to have presented to the special Commission of Fifteen at its meeting on December 1st.

Due to a misunderstanding concerning the date of the meeting, it has not been possible to secure as many signatures to the statement as we would wish. However, we feel that a fairly representative group of the younger ministers has joined in what we consider to be a most necessary recommendation.

We think that it would not be fair to make this statement public until the Commission has had ample opportunity to consider it. We do wish to give it publicity and shall begin to do so about the middle of December unless the Commission has some strong objection.

We are earnestly praying that God will direct you all in your deliberations.

Yours very sincerely,
Thomas Arthur Speers.

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

CHURCH OFFICE
47 UNIVERSITY PLACE

November 30th, 1925.

Rev. Lewis Seymour Mudge,
Hotel Chalfonte,
Atlantic City, N. J.

My dear Dr. Mudge:-

The following signatures
to the statement by the younger Presbyterian
ministers arrived in this morning's mail:-

- R. H. Blackshear, New York, N. Y.
- G. M. Gordon, East Orange, N. J.
- Graham Hunter, Fullerton, Cal.
- Ira L. Livingston, Forest Park, Ill.
- Charles M. Moser, Pine Plains, N. Y.
- Paul R. Wolfe, Keene Valley, N. Y.

Yours very sincerely,

Thomas Luther Speers

Henry C. Swearingen

1.197

HENRY CHAPMAN SWEARINGEN, MINISTER

RAYMOND G. FLETCHER, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

R. BUCHANAN MORTON, ORGANIST & DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

House of Hope Presbyterian Church

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

RECEIVED

December 17, 1925

DEC 21 1925

Mr. Speer

Robert E. Speer, D.D.
156 Fifth Ave
New York, N. Y.

My dear Robert:-

Thank you for your favor of December 11th enclosing letter from Dr. Howland of Buffalo together with copy of your reply. Dr. Howland's letter is returned herewith.

Am pleased to have the privilege of reading Dr. Howland's letter as well as your careful response to it. After the meetings at Atlantic City I had a personal conference with Dr. Coffin; also with Dr. Keigwin, Chairman of the Committee of Eleven of New York Presbytery. I quite incline to the view that our Commission in its report must not discuss theological issues but must find the way out by a careful definition and discrimination of the significance of various types of Assembly action and of the difference between all of these and concurrent enactments of the General Assembly and Presbyteries. It is encouraging to know that the brethren who feel aggrieved by the decision of the last Assembly do not ask for any constitutional changes nor question the authority of the Assembly to review and issue the ease which came up from New York Presbytery, nor the finality of the Assembly's decision in this particular instance. This would seem to simplify matters for the Commission very much. I can but feel that the protesting brethren themselves have come to this point as the result of their own careful study of the issues.

If a "breathing space" can be provided for the more liberal element while the situation is clearing, so that some of the ~~brethren~~ will not feel urged to drastic and devisive action, there is prospect of our wearying through with the unity of the Church saved.

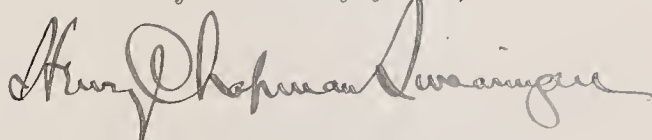
-2-

Probably the situation will take care of itself within a few years, providing there can be found standing room for everybody.

I am holding an open mind on the question of making a final report at the next Assembly.

With warm regards, I am,

Very cordially yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Henry Chapman Swearingen". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Henry Chapman Swearingen

HCS:LD

Murray Shipley Howland
LAFAYETTE AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
BUFFALO, NEW YORK

1199

MURRAY SHIPLEY HOWLAND,
MINISTER

RECEIVED

NOV 27 1925

Mr. Speer

November 24, 1925.

Rev. Robert E. Speer, D.D.,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York City.

Dear Dr. Speer:

There are some considerations in connectinn with the Commission of Fifteen that I want to lay before you as expressing the results of a good deal of thought.

First, I hope very earnestly that the Commission will decide that it is wise to have the report published at least a month before the meeting of General Assembly. It may be urged, with much force, that this Commission reports to the General Assembly, and must not make its report public.

On the other hand, the matter is of such great importance to the church that I feel that it will be a calamity for the General Assembly to decide the matter without opportunity for the church to form its opinion through discussion and conference. I can conceive that a report might be framed and the atmosphere in the Assemboy so prepared that the report would be adopted perhaps with considerable unanimity. That, however would not end the matter; it might only make the situation worse, the church feeling that something had been decided without giving the commissioners proper time to think over and discuss the whole matter. Final peace will not be arrived at in that way.

Second, I can imagine that the tendency of the Commission will be to play for time. While I believe that time is in favor of the group which has my sympathies, I feel that this delay will be dangerous. This year the influence of the moderator and his appeal to the church is very strong. There is rather a general cessation of controversy; no case involving the controversial points of theology is to come before the General Assembly. Such will not be not be the case next year. Next year the cases to be decided by the Judicial Committee of the Synod of New York which involve all points of controversy will undoubtedly be appealed to the General Assembly. If the decision of the Synod's Judicial Commission parallels earlier decisions of the Synod, this will make an even more serious situation that that existing last spring.

I have a decided feeling that the Commission itself cannot settle the division of opinion, but that its influence is sufficient to provide for a method of settlement. Sooner or later the question must come back in a referendum to the Presbyteries. If the Commission will provide a proper referendum, I believe it may thus pave the way to a settlement. There is a clear analogy between our situation in the church and the situation in the country at the time of the Civil War. At that time the division was caused by a question of slaver, but gradually the matter shifted from slavery to the constitutional

question, and Lincoln, with his clear insight as to what was fundamental, kept the struggle to the constitutional question. The division in our church today is undoubtedly due to theological differences, but with us too, the constitutional has gradually taken the place of the theological question because it is more fundamental, being a question of liberty itself.

In order to maintain the liberties of our church it must be further determined that the judicial decisions of the General Assembly concerning doctrinal questions do not become the law of the church except as to the case under adjudication. This, as you know, is Dr. Hodge's position and the position held by many, both conservative and liberal. Cannot the Commission prepare an overture as to this question and urge in its report that the General Assembly send this overture down to the Presbyteries? I realize what this would mean - a new year of turmoil as the matter was discussed in the Presbyteries, but it would tend to remove the question from the bitterness of theological dispute. It would decide for all time the question in our polity similar to the question between federal control and states rights in our national government. Once this constitutional question is decided, the theological question will take care of itself very largely as did the slavery question.

There are other matters which I feel are of great importance, but I shall not tax your time with my views upon them now. If this great constitutional question is once decided, there will be opportunity for the others later on.

I know you will pardon my long letter concerning matters in which we are all so vitally interested. Please be sure we are thoughtful of the great responsibility of the members of this commission. We have not forgotten it in our prayers.

With best wishes for you and your great interests,

Faithfully yours,

Henry Hoyle Howard

Robert A. Nichols

11201

COMMITTEE ON PROTESTANT LIBERTIES
IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

10 NELSON STREET, AUBURN, N. Y.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Rev. John J. Moment,
Chairman
Rev. Robert Hastings Nichols, D.D.,
Secretary
George H. Richards,
Treasurer
Rev. Albert J. Alexander, D.D.
Rev. Philip Smead Bird, D.D.

Rev. Henry Sloane Coffin, D.D.
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Rev. Jesse Herrmann, Ph.D.
Rev. Murray Shipley Howland, D.D.
Rev. Wendell Prime Keeler
Kenneth Lanning

Rev. Alexander Mac Coll, D.D.
Rev. Malcolm L. MacPhail, Ph.D.
Charles W. McAlpin
Rev. William P. Merrill, D.D.
Rev. J. V. Moldenhawer, D.D.
John P. Myers
Timothy Newell Pfeiffer

Dec. 23, 1925.

Dr. Robert E. Speer,
156 Fifth Ave.,
New York City

My dear Dr. Speer:-

The Executive Committee on Protestant Liberties in the Presbyterian Church at a recent meeting adopted a paper which it wished to submit to the consideration of the Special Commission of 1925, and directed that a copy of the paper should be sent to each member of the Commission. Accordingly I have the honor herewith to send you a copy of this paper.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

Robert Hastings Nichols

RHN AHM

**COMMITTEE ON PROTESTANT LIBERTIES
IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

10 NELSON STREET, AUBURN, N. Y.

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The Committee on Protestant Liberties, having heard the report of its representatives who appeared before the Commission of the General Assembly at Atlantic City on December 1st and 2nd, feel that there is one point on which their position should be made clear. The primary interest of this group is the maintenance of the unity of the Church and the preservation of the historic liberties of her ministry, always renewed after previous divisions-liberties which are essential to the proclamation of the gospel and the recruiting of young men for the ministry. We feel that these ends cannot be accomplished, if the decision of the last Assembly is upheld as "the established law of the Church". To submit to such an interpretation would be to surrender that liberty of conscience sacredly guaranteed in the Confession of Faith. We wish to make it plain that our objection is not to the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, concerning which there are diverse views among us, but to the declaration that this doctrine is essential, inasmuch as, with this as a beginning, the way is opened for imposing upon candidates for the ministry other extra-constitutional essentials, such as the creation of the world in six days, the verbal inerrancy of the Holy Scripture, the session of our Lord at the right hand of God in a physical and material body, the manner of our Lord's second coming, and many other interpretations of doctrines which, in other forms, we most heartily believe.

We would point out that the unity of the Church cannot be preserved if a judicial decision of the Assembly can make a literal interpretation of the language of the Bible and the Confession of Faith (sometimes clearly symbolic) obligatory upon candidates for licensure; for we could not consistently as Presbyters impose upon others interpretations which we do not ourselves accept. If this should be required it is difficult to see how a division of the Church can be avoided.